

KODIAK-Bear Range/Grazing Area Survey
(joint report) 1956



BEAR RANGE-GRAZING AREA SURVEY:JOINT REPORT

BY

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JOINT REPORT

BEAR RANGE - GRAZING AREA SURVEY

Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge

August 1956

Bureau of Land Management

Fish & Wildlife Service

As a result of the conflicts in Bear and livestock use which have arisen on the one-mile strip adjacent to the shoreline of the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge, Assistant Secretary of the Interior Wesley D'Ewart instructed a joint field survey by the Bureau of Land Management and the Fish & Wildlife Service (June 28, 1956 memo). The purpose of the survey is to determine areas within the Refuge suitable for grazing and containing the smallest possible bear population.

The joint field survey was conducted on August 2 - 5, 1956 by the following personnel:

D. L. Spencer, Refuge Supervisor, FWS
R. E. Wunderlich, Range Conservationist, BLM
W. A. Troyer, Refuge Manager, FWS

The survey consisted of an aerial reconnaissance of Kodiak Island with ground examinations in selected areas. Because of abundant bear populations in some areas or poor grazing potentials in others, only detailed examinations were made in the following areas:

1. Alitak (Aliutik) Peninsula

Approximate area - 140 square miles.

The peninsula is low and rolling in the SW portion and mountainous (to 2500 feet) in the NE portion.

Vegetation on the lowland is a dry-tundra (heath type) association with grassland in the mountain and valley portions. The dry-tundra consist mainly of *Empetrum*, *Vaccinium*, and *Salix*.

It is judged to be of very low value for livestock grazing at this time because of the dry-tundra cover in the lowland and the lack of areas suitable for the raising of winter feed. It may have limited value for a sheep operation. It is presently within the Alitak reindeer lease. Although occasional reindeer are reported on the peninsula, no significant use has been made of the area for reindeer grazing for a number of years. The area appears moderately suitable for reindeer.

The peninsula is used only slightly for wildlife. No bear kills have been reported in the lowland area for 5 years. Only occasional bear sign was noted. The neck of the peninsula in the Sulua Creek - Kaiugnak Bay area is well populated by bear and is the site of spring bear hunting activities.

The peninsula can be excluded from the Refuge (SW of a line from Portage Bay to Jap Bay - 4 miles) without any particular detriment to the Refuge or to bear. A barrier would be necessary for complete separation of livestock and bear.

Some bear predation may be experienced on stock which may range in the NE mountainous portion of the peninsula. Fencing of the neck of the peninsula is possible though unlikely in view of the low grazing potential of the area.

2. Three Saints Bay - Old Harbor - Barling Bay - Midway Bay area.

Approximate area - 20-25 square miles.

This area consists of wide valleys, interspersed with stream meanders and surrounded by steep mountainous terrain. The vegetation consists mainly of cottonwood and alder growth, cut by meadow and grassland areas.

The area would provide some summer range and winter feed for livestock. Limited portions of the areas are suitable for the preparation of winter feed. Although there has been some past use of livestock in this area, there does not appear to be any at the present time.

A total of 16 bear kills have been recorded in the area during the past 5 years. These are known to be largely kills made by the residents of Old Harbor and have frequently been utilized for food. Salmon streams are within the area, and it supports a moderate resident bear population.

Bear predation on livestock is potentially severe depending upon the precautions that are taken. The area offers remote possibilities for fencing. Elimination or reduction of the bear population in this area in favor of livestock raising will be difficult because of heavy cover, rough terrain, and proximity to the heavily populated bear area of Uyak Bay.

3. Peninsula south of Kiliuda Bay.

This peninsula offers little possibility for cattle grazing because of rugged terrain and lack of valley areas, although some summer use is probable. It supports a moderate to low bear population. No bear kills are reported in this area.

4. Shearwater Peninsula (Ugak Bay - Kiliuda Bay)

Approximate area - 190 square miles

This peninsula is of rugged terrain with mountain peaks extending to 2500 feet elevation. It contains a number of stream valleys aggregating approximately 20 square miles of flat to rolling country.

The mountainous areas are largely covered with dense alder vegetation including some willow and birch. Lowland areas contain grasslands interspersed with brushy cover and cottonwood timber.

The peninsula has suitable summer range for considerable number of stock. Three and possibly four areas are suitable for procuring winter feed either by grazing or through hay production.

Although the areas at the neck of the Shearwater peninsula and the head of Ugak Bay could maintain a small herd of livestock during the summer months (winter unknown), the permanent bear population in these areas at this time does not warrant the use.

This area supports a moderate to low, and possibly seasonal, bear population. Only one kill has been reported on the peninsula in the last 5 years, hence it is not now subjected to significant hunting pressure. Some interest has been expressed in the area by guides. Depending on status of western Kodiak bear populations, the peninsula and adjacent lands may have some future possibility for bear hunting.

A small number of deer are resident in the area. A few beaver dams were also noted.

The bear-cattle predation problem will be similar to that on the Chiniak peninsula.

5. Kupreanof Peninsula

This area consists mostly of one large open meadow and grassland with a fringe of high terrain. There are numerous lakes throughout the area. Most of the land between the lakes supports a rich vegetation and is quite dry by the first of August.

Although the winters are quite severe in this area, the summers bring more sunshine and warmer temperatures than the town of Kodiak according to residents of Ugalik Bay and Terror Bay. Inspection of these areas which lie west of Kupreanof Peninsula substantiated the fact that with proper care quantities of vegetables and forage crops can grow to maturity in the northwest portion of the Island. At the time of inspection at Ugalik Bay (August 4, 1956) oats had only a short time before they would be mature and ripe. Mr. D. E. Reed, resident of Ugalik Bay, stated that wheat has been raised in the area without difficulty.

There has been some livestock use on this area, but conflicting reports shade the reason for lack of present use. There are two patented homesteads in the Settlers Cove area which indicates some interest in the past. The number of livestock that could be raised on the Kupreanof area would vary with the type of operation and the availability of winter feed obtained either by grazing or through hay production. The potential for this area looks good and could possibly be managed in such a manner that hay or even higher protein forage could be raised whereby summer range could be obtained from the higher terrain and the Kizhuyak area.

The area supports a low bear population, probably ranging mainly in the Viekoda Bay region. Few bear trails were noted on this survey. A total of 26 bear kills have been recorded on the Kupreanof Peninsula and adjacent peninsula south of Viekoda Bay over the past 5 years. These have been taken mainly in the Viekoda Bay area. Distribution of kills within Viekoda Bay is not known. Information from guides and hunters indicates very little hunting on the Peninsula.

The Kupreanof area is adjacent to a good populated bear area. A portion of this population migrates to the Kupreanof Peninsula. For this reason a barrier fence across the neck of the Peninsula is considered essential to exclude the bear if the area is utilized for grazing. This barrier would be feasible because of the type of terrain.

The peninsula supports a population of deer and some beaver. Occasionally elk are reported here, usually in the vicinity of Whale Island. If elk become established on Kodiak Island, it will be in this area because of favorable habitat in the proximity of narrow water passes from Raspberry Island. Therefore the possible conflict between elk and cattle may be remotely considered.

The Peninsula is not considered of high potential importance as bear range because of an apparent low resident and seasonal population.

Grazing on one-mile littoral strip.

A consideration of two lease areas presently on the one-mile strip follows:

1. Uganik Island

Lease serial # 019644, January 1, 1955, 20 years, Carl Brunstad, 1000 head of sheep, Uganik Island, east portion, one-mile strip. Stocking requirement for the first year of 130 mature sheep. As of August 1956 no animals have been stocked on the Island. Although no requirements have been met, Mr. Brunstad has contacted BLM and instituted arrangements with the Veterans Administration for a loan to purchase livestock and improvements.

Uganik Island, approximately 60 square miles in area, is mountainous over the western two-thirds with some lowland areas on the eastern end. A broad interior valley extends lengthwise of the Island. The Island maintains a moderate bear population and proximity to Kodiak Island permits

bear to move to and from the Island. The Island sustains moderate hunting pressure, and 13 bear kills have been recorded there in the past 4½ years. It is recommended that the lease be cancelled due to failure to meet stocking requirements. The lease should not be reissued because of the importance of the Island as a bear area.

2. Uganik Bay lease, D. B. and M. P. Reed, serial # 026177. January 1, 1955, 20 years. Stocking allowed to carrying capacity of land. First year stocking requirements of 6 animal units have been met with 19 goats, 2 sheep, and 2 steers.

This area consists of the steep brushy slopes bordering the south side of Uganik Bay from the head of the South Arm to Miners Point. It is a heavily populated bear area and supports considerable hunting pressure.

Because of the restricted nature of the operation, care of stock, and the use of off-shore islands, no serious conflict is foreseen on this lease. In consideration of the fact that the leases has met the current requirements of the lease, it is recommended that it be continued. The lease should not be renewed upon completion of the lease period or on termination by the lessee prior to the term of the lease.

The BLM-FWS field party are in agreement on the foregoing discussion of areas. A divergence of opinion was held regarding action to be taken, hence recommendations are discussed separately.

Recommendations - Fish & Wildlife Service Representatives

A review of the Executive Order associated correspondence and reports relating to the establishment of the Kodiak Refuge leads the FWS survey party to the opinion that the Executive Order provided for required ranching areas in the Chiniak Peninsula.⁽¹⁾ The mile strip open to Public Land Laws and administered by the BLM provided for homesteading and small industries not contrary to primary Refuge objectives. Grazing on the mile strip, which is within the area most heavily used by bear, is incompatible with bear conservation and hence tends to nullify the purpose of the Refuge.

Any increase in grazing activity on the Island will encounter bear depredations and hence will result in agitation for reduction of the total Kodiak bear population, a development not in keeping with the primary objectives of the Refuge.

In consideration of the foregoing, the FWS party believes that any additional grazing should be limited in extent and confined to good grazing areas which may be isolated, perhaps through construction of barrier fences, from the main part of Kodiak Island. Areas supporting the lowest bear populations and relatively isolated from the main part of the Island are as follows:

1. Alitak (Aliutak) Peninsula

The portion of this peninsula SW of a line from Portage Bay to Jap Bay is of little present or potential value to Refuge objectives. Inspection indicated this peninsula is also of low value for grazing.

2. Shearwater Peninsula (S. of Ugak Bay)

This peninsula has a low population of resident bear, rough topography, and dense, brushy cover. Although presenting areas suitable for grazing, bear predation problems will be similar to those encountered in the establishment of ranching on the Chiniak Peninsula.

3. Kupreanof Peninsula

This peninsula probably supports a lower bear population than that of the Shearwater area. Most of these bear will be in the vicinity of Viskoda Bay. Because of its proximity to heavily populated bear areas, a barrier fence from Viskoda Bay to Kishmyak Bay is considered essential in the event of grazing use to prevent the drift of bear into the Peninsula.

(1) Executive Order No. 8857. Secretary of the Interior H. L. Ickes' July 1, 1941 Letter of Transmittal of E. O. 8857 - Investigations of Grazing Conditions on Kodiak Island, 1940, Rowland and Kinsley

Conclusions and Recommendations by BLM representative

Conclusions:

The information thus far presented, other than the separate recommendations by the Fish & Wildlife personnel, have met the agreement of all concerned in this study and have established the following facts:

1. The western portion of Kodiak Island is heavily populated with bear and, although the area may have a potential for agriculture or livestock grazing purpose, is not here considered. The southwestern portion is not considered of value at this time for livestock purpose whereby the present lease use of native reindeer is more appropriate.

2. That of the areas given the closest consideration, the Alitak (Aliutik) Peninsula is not considered of any consequence because of its present cover consisting mainly of vegetation which is mostly unusable by livestock.

3. That the remaining areas contain at least some value for livestock raising purposes. The areas ranked by their importance according to this examiner would be: (1) Kupreanof Peninsula, (2) Shearwater Peninsula, (3) Three Saints Bay - Old Harbor area, and (4) the peninsula south of Kilinda Bay.

4. That there are resident populations of bear within the areas of higher value for livestock use (recommended areas) that contribute very little at the present time to the harvest value of the island's bear population.

Recommendations:

1. In order to eliminate as much conflict as possible in the future, that the area selected as an exchange for the balance of the one-mile strip area be in one area connected with the Chiniak area which is presently under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management.

2. The area to be set outside the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge consist of those lands lying north and east of a line beginning at the head and on the north side of Viakoda Bay, thence southeast between the water drainages to the top of the mountains, thence southwest along the highest portion of the mountains which traverse the center of the island, thence ending at the most northerly point on Three Saints Bay. (See Map No. III). The area of this tract of land is estimated to be around 500 square miles which includes approximately 187 square miles of the present one-mile strip. The estimated area of the one-mile strip is 814 square miles (according to Fish & Wildlife Service records). The balance that would remain within the one-mile strip would be approximately 627 square miles.

This area would contain a maximum of natural barrier with the north and south ends requiring artificial blockades. It is understood that an occasional straggler will cross the natural mountain barrier, but settlement of the areas would tend to discourage these movements.

3. Past experience on the Chiniak area shows that bear within an area of livestock useage constitute a continuous threat of livestock predation regardless of the actual livestock kills that occur. As long as bear are protected on the areas outside the Refuge, it will be essentially the same as if the areas were within the Refuge. Therefore, the areas of active livestock use should have an open season on bear the year around and allow the eradication of the bear populations within the areas of settlement where active use is being made of the land.

The area that is here recommended for exclusion from the Refuge will form a compact unit connecting Sitkalidak Island and the other adjacent livestock areas. This unit would eventually allow land travel of settlers and livestock to a central market, such as Kodiak, and possibly eliminate expensive and hazardous water portage.

Miscellaneous Data

Map No. I shows the distribution of the recorded kill of 614 bears for the 4½ year period April 1952 to June 1956. Approximately 80% of this kill is within the one-mile littoral strip as indicated on the map. Distribution of the kill varies slightly from year to year according to weather conditions and guide preference. Slightly over ½ of the kill is by non-resident hunters. The kill density as indicated on the map does not necessarily indicate relative population density, but rather a combination of accessibility and density. For example, the Sturgeon River area is heavily populated by bear, but no hunting is done in the area because of inaccessibility.

Map No. II shows the distribution by Management Districts of the 1953 estimate of 1669 bear for the Island. An estimated 65% of the total Kodiak bear population utilize the one-mile littoral strip part of the year. Intensive survey areas indicate little population change since 1953.

Total area within the mile strip is approximately 614 miles.

Map No. III shows the location of the present grazing leases on the one-mile strip as well as the areas recommended by the Bureau of Land Management representative and the Fish & Wildlife representatives to be excluded from the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge.

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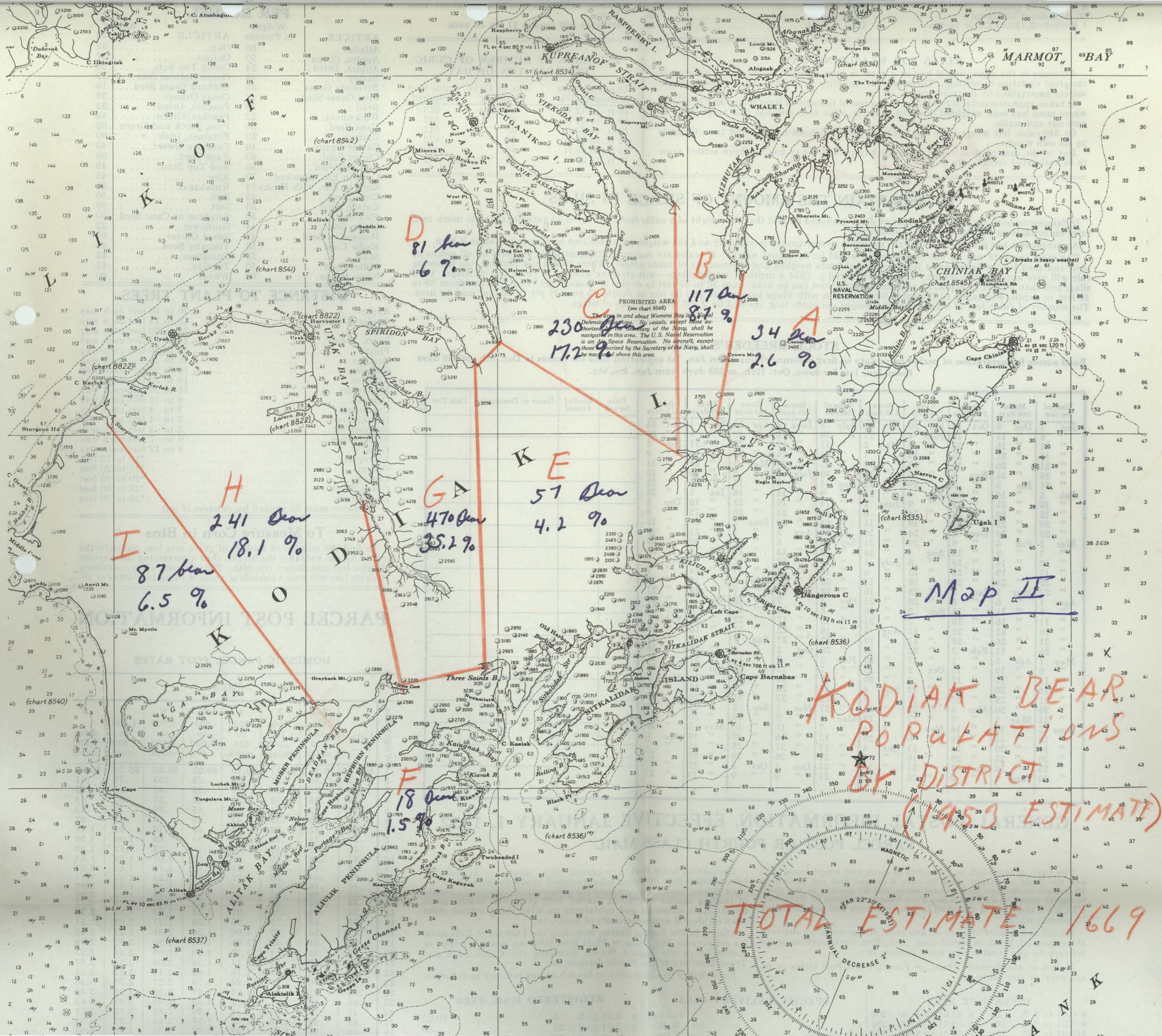
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TO REFUGE SUPERVISOR FISH AND WILDLIFE SVC KENAI ALASKA
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WIRE OR CALL YOUR ADVICE BLM PROPOSED KODIAK BOUNDRY ONE
GRAZING POTENTIAL AREA BETWEEN PROPOSED BOUNDRY AND PRESENT
BOUNDRY TWO LOGICAL FWS ARGUMENT OPPOSING NATURAL RIDGE
BOUNDRY PROPOSED BY BLM THREE CAN YOU AGREE ON EXCLUDING
ONLY PORTION EAST OF LINE HEAD KILIMDA BAY NW TO PROPOSED BOUNDRY
AND THEN RE VIEKODA BAY

BT

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D
81 bear
6.7 %

H
241 bear
18.1 %

I
87 bear
6.5 %

G
470 bear
35.2 %

F
18 bear
1.5 %

C
230 bear
17.2 %

B
117 bear
8.7 %

E
57 bear
4.2 %

A
34 bear
2.6 %

Map II

KODIAK BEAR POPULATIONS BY DISTRICT (1953 ESTIMATE)

TOTAL ESTIMATE 1669

PROHIBITED AREA
(see chart 8548)
The area in and about Womens Bay is a Naval Defense Space Area. No vessels, except those authorized by the Secretary of the Navy, shall be navigated in this area. The U.S. Naval Reservation is an Air Space Reservation. No aircraft, except those authorized by the Secretary of the Navy, shall be navigated above this area.

