

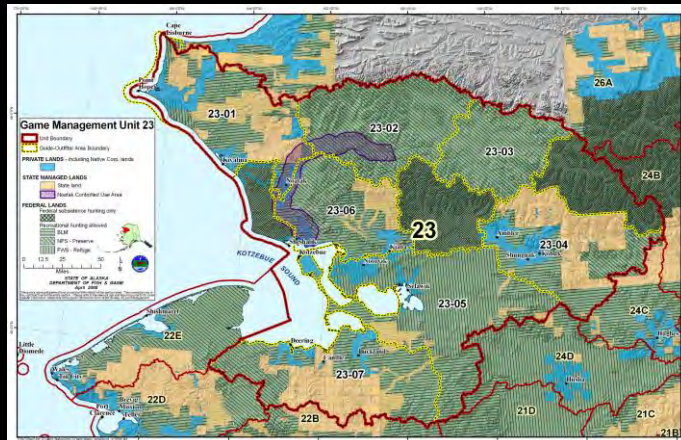
# Unit 23 Planning Process

May 14-15, 2014

## Background Information

Jim Dau

## Unit 23: Land Ownership & G-O Areas



(map prepared by Sally Timp, ADF&G)

## **This Presentation**

### ***Western Arctic Herd:***

- 2013 Census estimate
- Population projections: herd size & bull:cow ratios

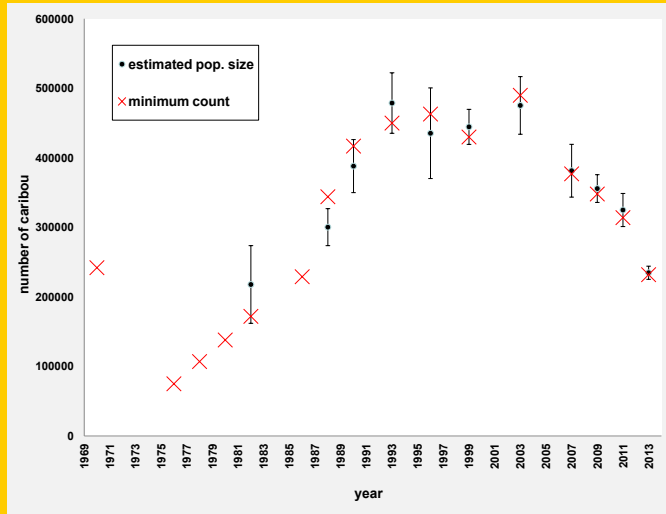
### ***Harvest Data:***

- Hunters by species hunted
- Residence of visiting hunters
- Timing of nonlocal hunting effort
- Distribution of hunters among Guide-Outfitter areas
- Hunters by commercial services used

### ***WAH Movements During Fall 2013***

## **Western Arctic Caribou Herd Population Information**

## Western Arctic Caribou Herd Population Estimates



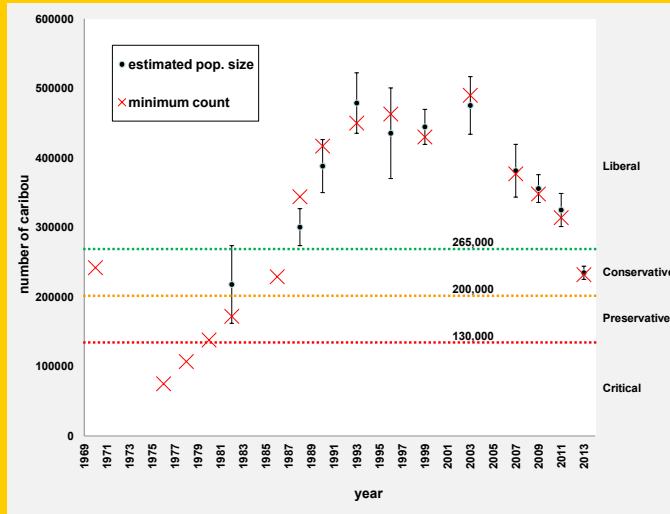
## Management & Harvest Levels Relative to Population Size and Trend

Table 1

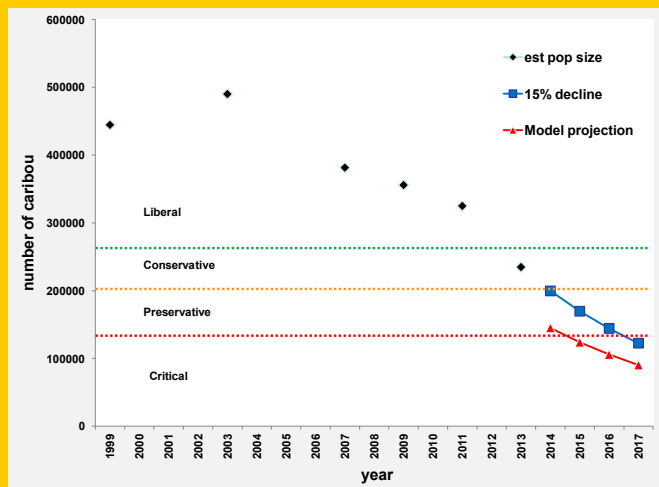
Management Level and Harvest Level	Population Trend		
	Declining Low: 6%	Stable Med: 7%	Increasing High: 8%
Liberal	Pop: 265,000+ Harvest: 18,550-24,850	Pop: 230,000+ Harvest: 16,100-21,700	Pop: 200,000+ Harvest: 16,000-21,600
Conservative	Pop: 200,000-265,000 Harvest: 14,000-18,550	Pop: 170,000-230,000 Harvest: 11,900-16,100	Pop: 150,000-200,000 Harvest: 12,000-16,000
Preservative	Pop: 130,000-200,000 Harvest: 8,000-12,000	Pop: 115,000-170,000 Harvest: 8,000-12,000	Pop: 100,000-150,000 Harvest: 8,000-12,000
Critical Keep Bull: Cow ratio ≥40 Bull: 100 Cow	Pop: <130,000 Harvest: 6,000-8,000	Pop: <115,000 Harvest: 6,000-8,000	Pop: <100,000 Harvest: 6,000-8,000

Taken from WAH Management Plan (revised 2011)

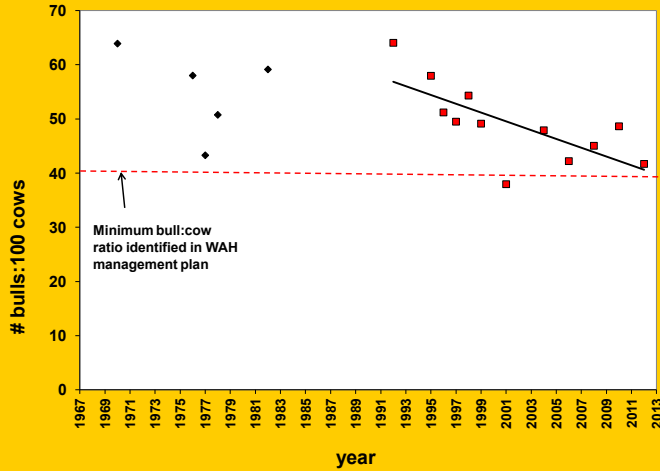
## Western Arctic Caribou Herd Population Estimates



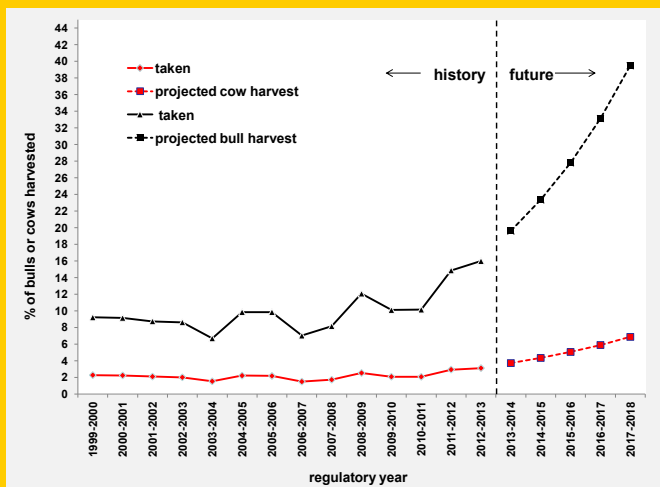
## Western Arctic Caribou Herd Population Projections



## Western Arctic Caribou Herd Bull: Cow Ratios



## Western Arctic Caribou Herd Bull & Cow Harvest Projections



## Western Arctic Caribou Herd Management Plan



The latest revision of the Plan was finalized in December 2011

There are 7 primary elements of the plan – Two are most relevant to user conflicts in Unit 23:

- Regulations
- Population Management

## Regulations Element

### Strategies

- A. Support the existing regulatory process of state advisory committees & federal regional advisory councils
- B. Acknowledge and provide for local caribou hunting and use patterns as well as opportunities for other users
- C. Develop hunting regulations according to herd management strategies outlined in this plan
- D. Simplify caribou hunting regulations

### Management actions

1. Promote consistency between state and federal regulations
2. Encourage efficient, effective and consistent enforcement of regulations affecting caribou hunting
3. Support efforts such as the Unit 23 Working Group
4. Reevaluate the amount of caribou reasonably necessary for subsistence uses as needed (Note: The WAHANS was revised at the January 2014 BOG meeting to include the TCH)
5. Submit recommendations regarding hunting to the appropriate advisory committees and regional advisory councils

## Population Management Element

**Table 1** relates population size and trend to management actions and harvest levels

**Appendix 2** provides detailed recommendations regarding:

- population monitoring by agencies
- harvest management by BOG & FSB

**NOTE:** This section of the plan does not attempt to establish hard and fast rules or thresholds for managing the WAH. Instead, population values and recommendations are presented only as guidelines to help the agencies and regulatory boards adjust to changes in the biological status of this herd.

## Appendix 2: Management Recommendations

### Liberal Management (green)

- Reduce nonresident bull harvest only to maintain 40 bulls:100 cows
- No restriction of resident bull harvest unless <40 bulls:100 cows

### Conservative Management (orange)

- No harvest of calves
- No nonresident cow harvest
- Restrict nonresident bull harvest
- Encourage voluntary reduction in resident cow harvest
- Limit subsistence harvest of bulls only if <40 bulls:100 cows

### Preservative Management (yellow)

- No harvest of calves
- Limit harvest of cows by residents through permit hunts and/or village quotas
- Limit subsistence harvest of bulls only if <40 bulls:100 cows
- Harvest restricted to residents only according to state and federal law – closure of some federal public lands may be necessary

### Critical Management (red)

- No harvest of calves
- Highly restrict resident cow harvest through permit hunts and/or village quotas
- Limit subsistence harvest of bulls to maintain 40 bulls:100 cows
- Harvest restricted to residents only according to state and federal law – closure of some federal public lands may be necessary

**State of Alaska Intensive Management Process  
(Predator Control/Habitat Improvement)**

**Determine whether WAH is important for high levels of human consumption** – Positive finding

**Establish intensive management objectives**

- There are 2 of them:
  - Population objective -  $\geq 200,000$  caribou
  - Harvest objective – 12,000-20,000 caribou

**Determine harvestable surplus** (harvest rate = 2% cows & 15% bulls)

- Current year
  - 235,000 caribou
  - harvestable surplus: 14,500 caribou
- Projected for 2014-2015
  - ~200,000 caribou
  - harvestable surplus: ~13,000 caribou

**State of Alaska Intensive Management Process  
(Cont.)**

**When harvestable surplus is <12,000 caribou:**

- ADF&G conducts a 'feasibility assessment' - describes predator control and habitat improvement options to be considered
- BOG determines what options are feasible; if predator control is deemed feasible,
- ADF&G prepares an operational plan for a predator control program
- BOG reviews plan and either approves, disapproves or modifies it
- ADF&G considers implementation of the plan based on funding, staff, etc.

**This process is set in statute: ADF&G & the BOG *have* to follow it when the WAH (or any wildlife population) goes below its population or harvest objective.**

**If current population & harvest trends continue, the WAH may be at or near its IM objectives in another year or two**



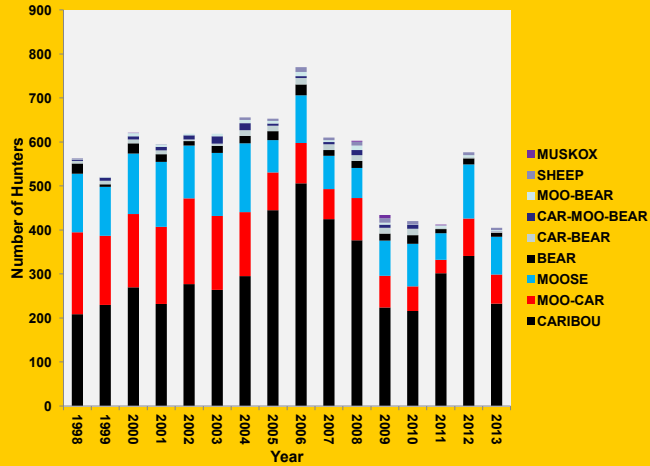
**Why spend so much time on WAH biology & management for a working group that is charged with minimizing conflicts among users in Unit 23?**

- Sensitivities regarding competition and/or disturbance increase among all users, including local residents, visiting hunters and commercial operators, when caribou are not readily available.
- The overall decline in WAH abundance combined with a disproportionate decline of bulls will make it more difficult for people to harvest caribou in the near future (this, along with delayed timing of fall migrations, is probably already affecting some villages, e.g. Noatak).
- Increased sensitivities attributable to social factors may be offset somewhat if reduced availability of caribou (and moose) or regulatory restrictions cause fewer nonlocal hunters to come to Unit 23.
- However, even with reductions in wildlife, over the short term Unit 23 will still probably provide better hunting opportunities than most other parts of Alaska: the WAH is still one of the largest caribou herds in North America.

## **Harvest Data: All Species**

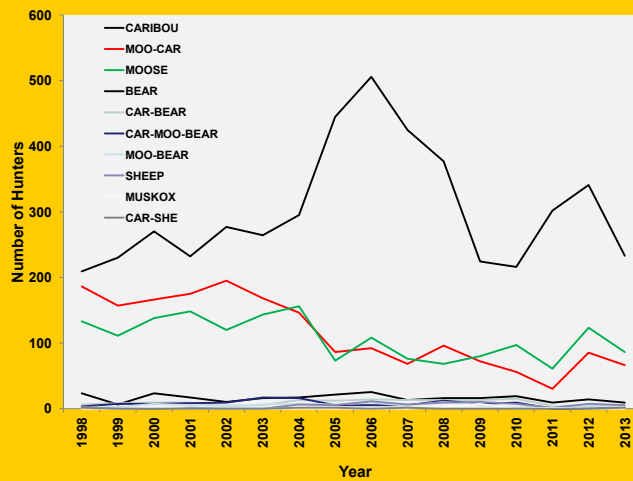
- **Data from harvest ticket, registration & drawing permit systems**
- **Data is only for hunters who live outside Unit 23**
  - **Nonresidents (including alien hunters)**
  - **Residents of Alaska who live outside Unit 23**
- **1 Record per hunter: caribou, moose, brown bear & sheep hunters combined**
- **Data from Fall 1998 through Fall 2013**
  - **August 1-October 31**

### Numbers of Nonlocal Hunters by Species & Year (Fall 1998-2013)

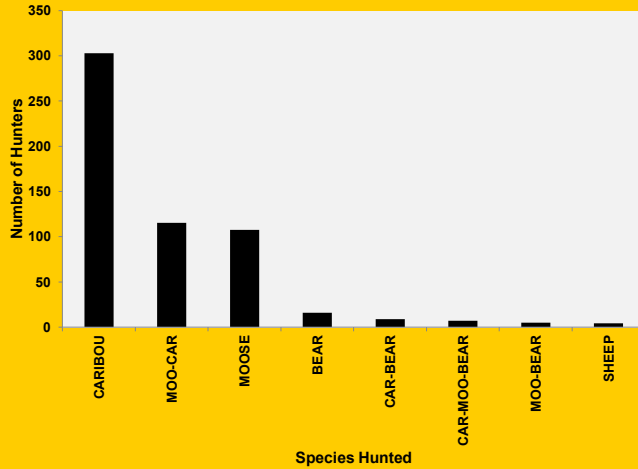


Categories are mutually exclusive; each hunter counted only once even if hunted >1 species

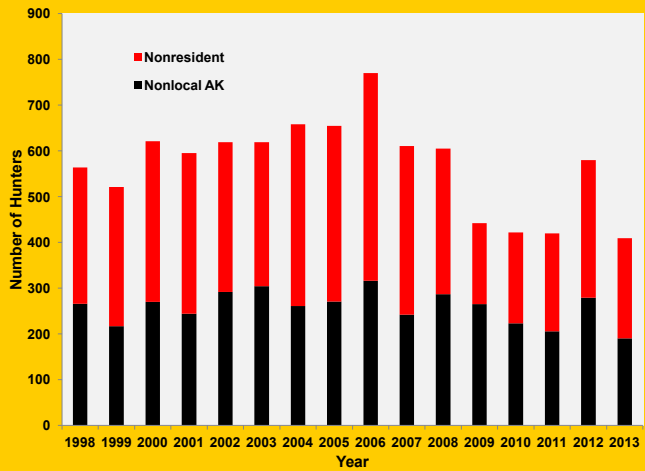
### Annual Numbers of Nonlocal Hunters by Species & Year (Fall 1998-2013)



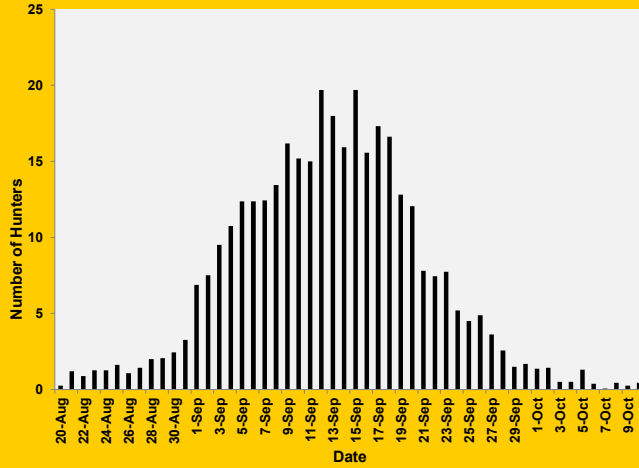
### Average Annual Number of Nonlocal Hunters by Species (Fall 1998 thru 2013 combined)



### Numbers of Nonresident & Nonlocal Alaskan Resident Hunters

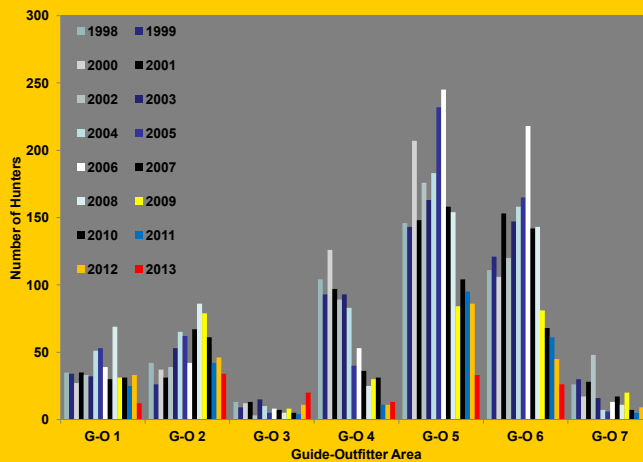


### Average Nonlocal Hunter Effort by Day, Aug. 20-Oct. 10 (1998 thru 2013)

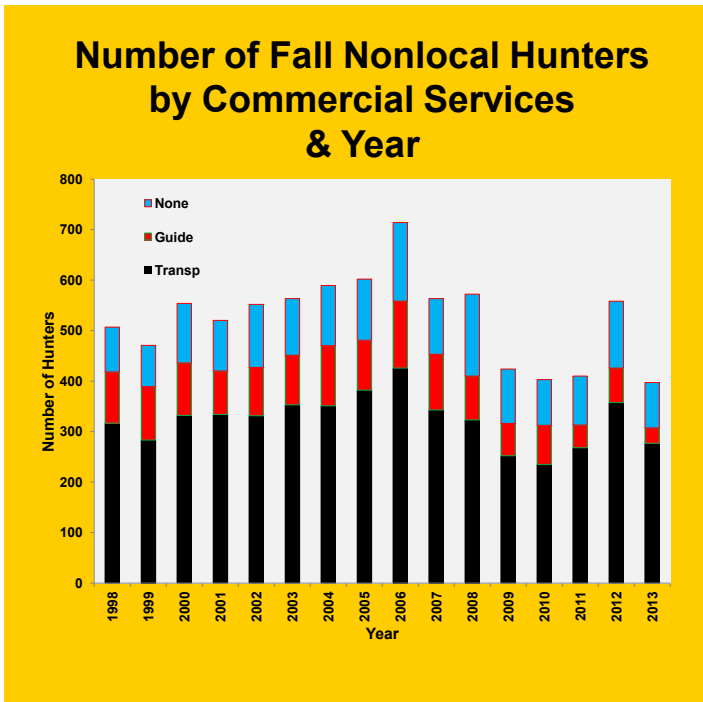
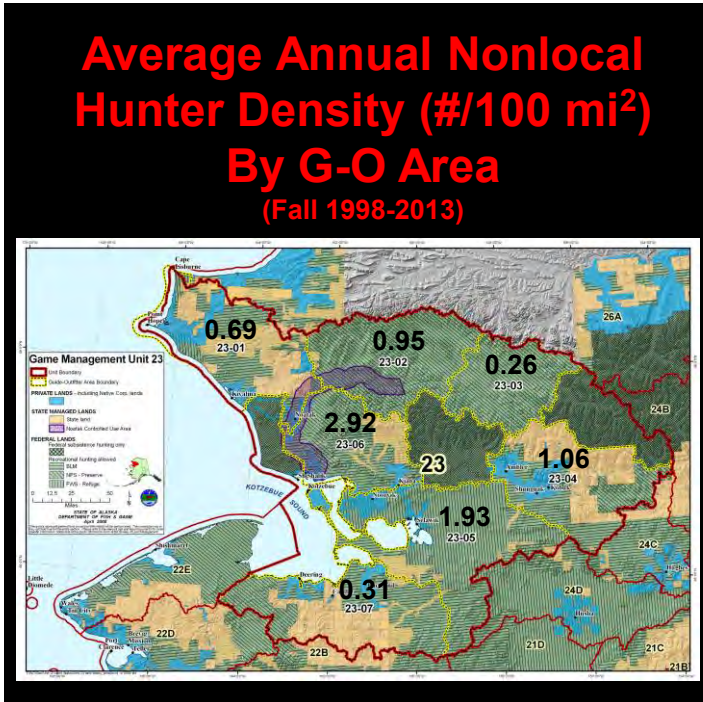


'Date of kill' used to track chronology of effort; when >1 species taken, midpoint date was calculated.

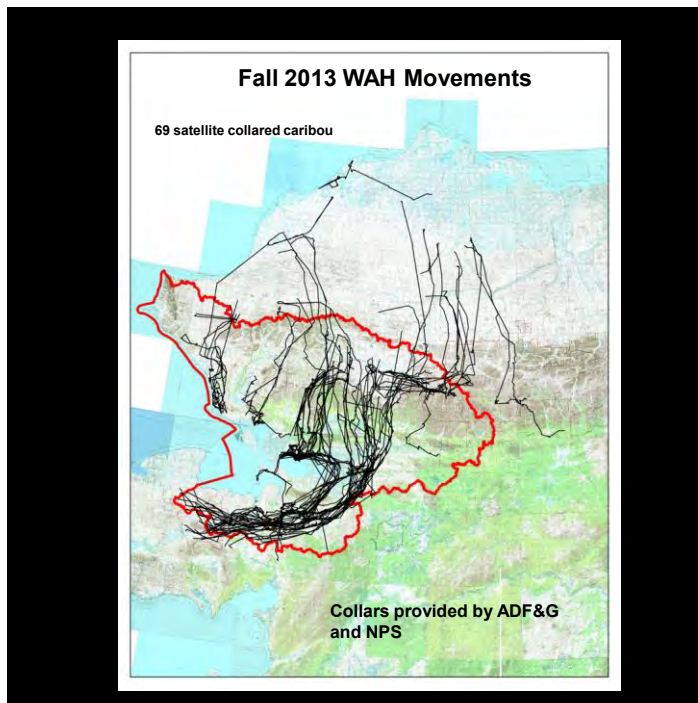
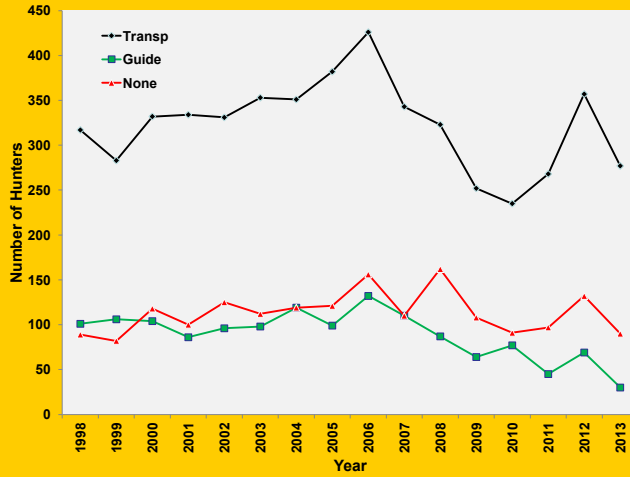
### Nonlocal Fall Hunters by Guide-Outfitter Area & Year (1998 through 2013)



Note: In recent years, an increasingly high proportion of hunters did not report the specific location where they hunted (2011-30%; 2012-51%; 2013-54%).



## Number of Nonlocal Hunters by Commercial Services Through Time



# Questions?

