

# HAINES BOROUGH HELISKI MANAGEMENT

timeline and considerations





**"The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated."**

MAHATMA GANDHI

A photograph of two mountain goats with thick white wool and black horns. One goat is in the foreground, looking towards the camera, while another is slightly behind it to the left. The background is a blurred natural setting.

# Why care?

about  
MOUNTAIN GOATS  
and other wildlife

## SUBSISTENCE FOOD / HUNTING

90% of local people utilize subsistence resources to feed their families. Mountain goats are a major target for local subsistence hunters and trophy hunters.

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## CULTURAL IMPORTANCE

Chilkat and Chilkoot Tlingit people have an ancient and ongoing relationship with mountain goats, whose wool is used to weave the famed Chilkat blankets.

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## NATURE-BASED TOURISM / ECONOMY

Visitors enjoy watching wildlife. Tourism is a major source of revenue.


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## BIODIVERSITY / RESILIENCE

Chilkat mountain goats are genetically unique, and that unique genetic heritage may be important for evolutionary resilience. Diverse, complex ecosystems are more resilient to stressors and changes.

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**STUDIES HAVE REPEATEDLY  
SHOWN DISTURBANCE OF  
DENNING BROWN BEARS AND  
WOLVERINES BY HELICOPTERS**

**RESULTING IN DEN ABANDONMENT  
AND REDUCED CUB SURVIVAL**



# HISTORY OF HELISKI MANAGEMENT

**1996:**

3RD CLASS  
HAINES BOROUGH  
ADVISORY VOTE

Voters do not support regularly scheduled helicopter tours within the Haines Borough. (summer tours)

**2001:**

3RD CLASS HAINES BOROUGH ADVISORY VOTE

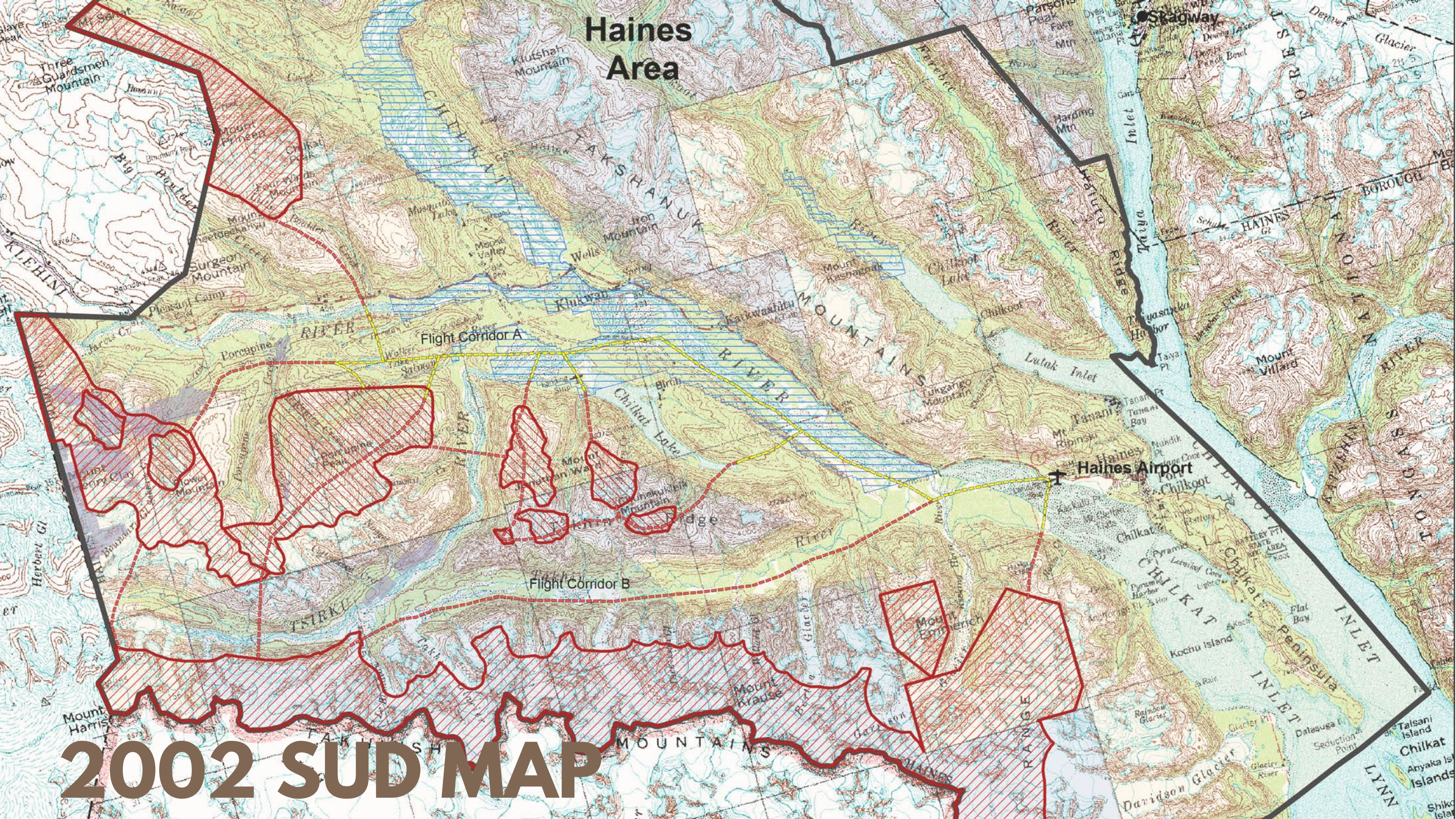
"Do you support the managed use of helicopters in the Haines Borough for commercial recreation, including heli-skiing, between the dates of February 1st and April 30th each year?"

*How your vote will be interpreted:* Management of State and Federal lands in the Haines Borough is at the discretion of the State of Alaska's Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Forest Service, and Bureau of Land Management. For the purposes of this advisory vote, "managed" means that local planners would make recommendations to these regulatory agencies.

**Advisory vote result: YES 55% NO 45%**



# Haines Area



2002 SUD MAP



# HISTORY OF HELISKI MANAGEMENT

## 2004:

The state withdraws the SUD regulations in May 2004; the regulations were not finalized so were never enforceable.

The Northern Wild Sheep and Goat Council (NWSGC) releases a position statement on helicopter-supported recreation and mountain goats. {mtn. goats don't habituate, need 1500 m. buffers around critical habitat}

## 2005:

HAINES BOROUGH BEGINS MANAGING COMMERCIAL HELISKIING

establishing "designated conditions" for commercial heliski tours, including a map where heliskiing may occur on state land.

## 2010:

ADF&G BEGINS LONG-TERM COLLARED GOAT STUDY OF LOCAL MOUNTAIN GOAT HABITAT USAGE.

collecting over 200,000 GPS locations to help determine goat movement patterns over time.

## 2011:

BOROUGH AMENDS THE HELISKI MAP, INCREASING HELISKI AREA

The amendment removed protections for wildlife below 1500' along the Takhinshas and elsewhere. The borough combines skier and photo days in the allotment. Total skier days available increased from 1200 to 2600.





# 2011 HELISKI MAP



# HISTORY OF HELISKI MANAGEMENT

## 2013:

The borough adopts "Haines Borough Administrative Policy--Heliskiing GPS Data Collection, Submission, and Compliance" which includes:

"GPS units will be part of the helicopter, operating with flight following or tracking, and be submitted directly through the helicopter operator (e.g. Temsco, Coastal Helicopter)."

"The term "part of the helicopter" means: installed into the helicopter, using power from the helicopter, and managed by the pilot."

## 2018:

Division of Wildlife Conservation, ADF&G, Wildlife Research Report: Mountain Goat Resource Selection in the Haines-Skagway Area: Implications for Helicopter Skiing Management (culmination of long-term study from 2010-2018).

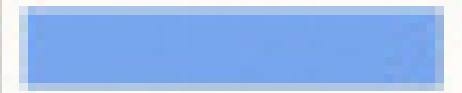
"Land management decisions need to incorporate information about trade-offs associated with proposed uses in order to have socially and politically acceptable outcomes. In the case of helicopter skiing management, the economic benefits of helicopter skiing activity are commonly balanced against impacts on wildlife habitat and populations, local property values, nonmotorized backcountry activities, commercial snowmachine operations, and personal aesthetic considerations. "



**Legend**



Approved Hell-ski Areas



Mtn Goat Winter Habitat

# GOAT WINTER HABITAT / HELISKI AREA (NORTH)



Hiteshitak

Mt Raymond

Nourse

Chilkoot-  
Ferebee

Four Winds

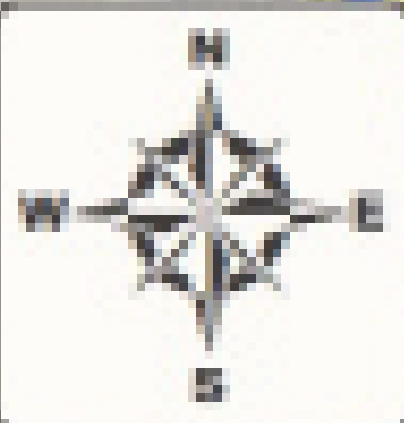


Porcupine

Takhin

Takhinsha

**GOAT WINTER HABITAT /  
HELISKI AREA (SOUTH)**





# HISTORY OF HELISKI MANAGEMENT

**2020:**

**The Northern Wild Sheep and Goat Council (NWSGC)** releases a revised position statement on Commercial & Recreational Disturbance of Mountain Goats: Recommendations for Management."

**Management/Monitoring:**

"Development of policy that fosters data sharing between operators and local biologists to aid in development of effective mitigation strategies needed to reduce risk of potential disturbance to mountain goats (sensu Wilson et al. 2011)."

**2020:**

**Report by Crupi, Gregovich and White, September 23, 2020:**

"The effects of heli-skiing disturbance during early season and late season hibernation may be pronounced and have the potential to cause den abandonment."

**2020:**

**ADF&G Advisory** – Closure to mountain goat hunting between the Kicking Horse River and Davidson Glacier (RGO26). 40% fewer goats observed between September 2016 and 2019.

**ADF&G Advisory** – Takhinsha Range closed to mountain goat hunting between Canadian border and Garrison Glacier (RGO26). 54% fewer goats observed between Sept. of 2016 and 2019.

**2021:**

Due to the ongoing low numbers and continued vulnerability of goats in both areas, the above **ADF&G emergency goat hunting closures were reissued** for the 2nd year in a row.





**40%**

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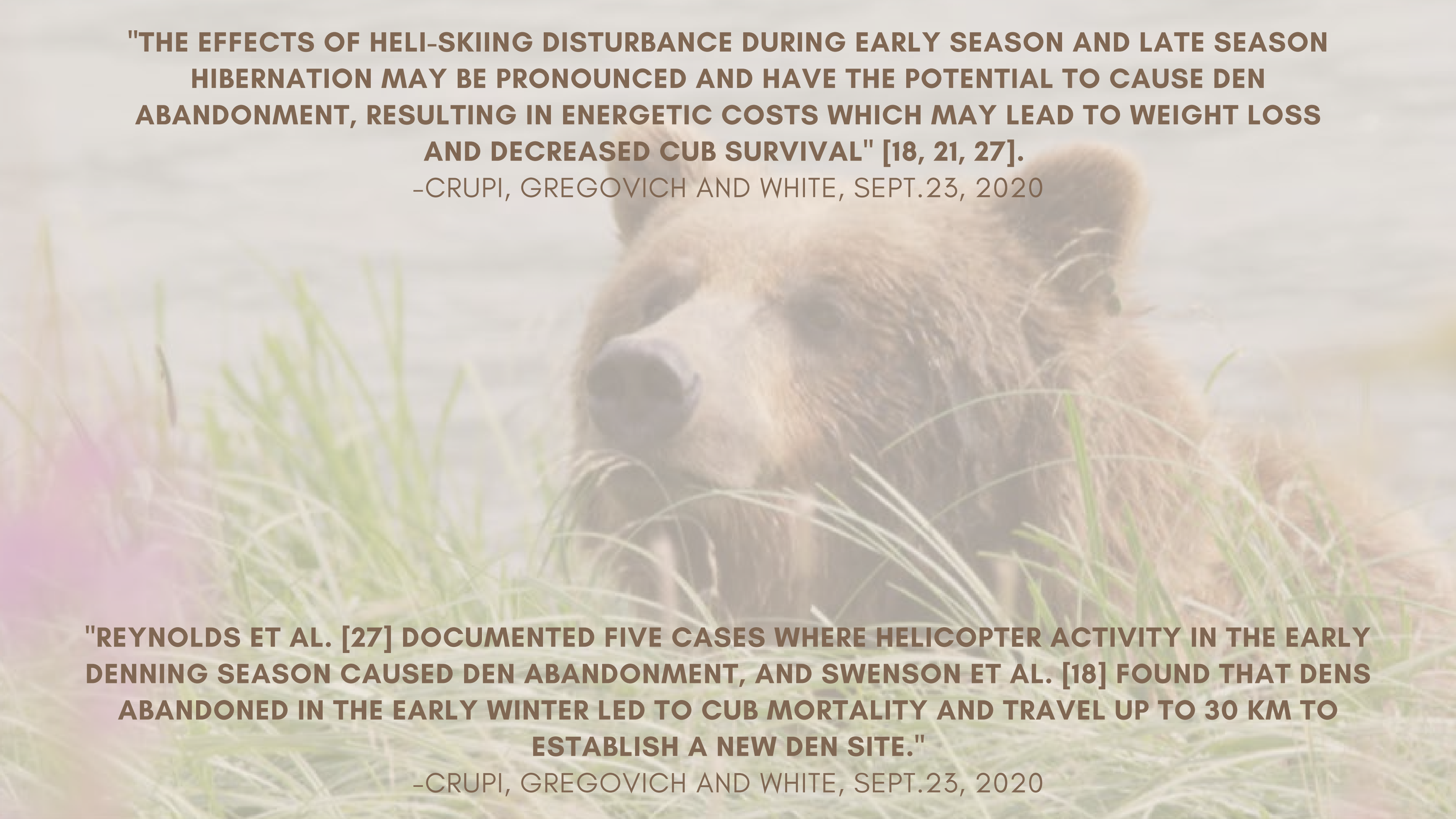
FEWER GOATS OBSERVED BETWEEN  
THE KICKING HORSE RIVER AND  
DAVIDSON GLACIER  
(SEPT 2016-2019).

**54%**

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FEWER GOATS OBSERVED  
BETWEEN CANADIAN BORDER AND  
GARRISON GLACIER  
(SEPT 2016-2019).



A brown bear cub is shown in profile, sitting in a field of tall, green grass. The cub is looking down and to the left. The background is a soft-focus landscape with a body of water and distant hills under a hazy sky. The text is overlaid on the top half of the image.

**"THE EFFECTS OF HELI-SKIING DISTURBANCE DURING EARLY SEASON AND LATE SEASON HIBERNATION MAY BE PRONOUNCED AND HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO CAUSE DEN ABANDONMENT, RESULTING IN ENERGETIC COSTS WHICH MAY LEAD TO WEIGHT LOSS AND DECREASED CUB SURVIVAL" [18, 21, 27].**

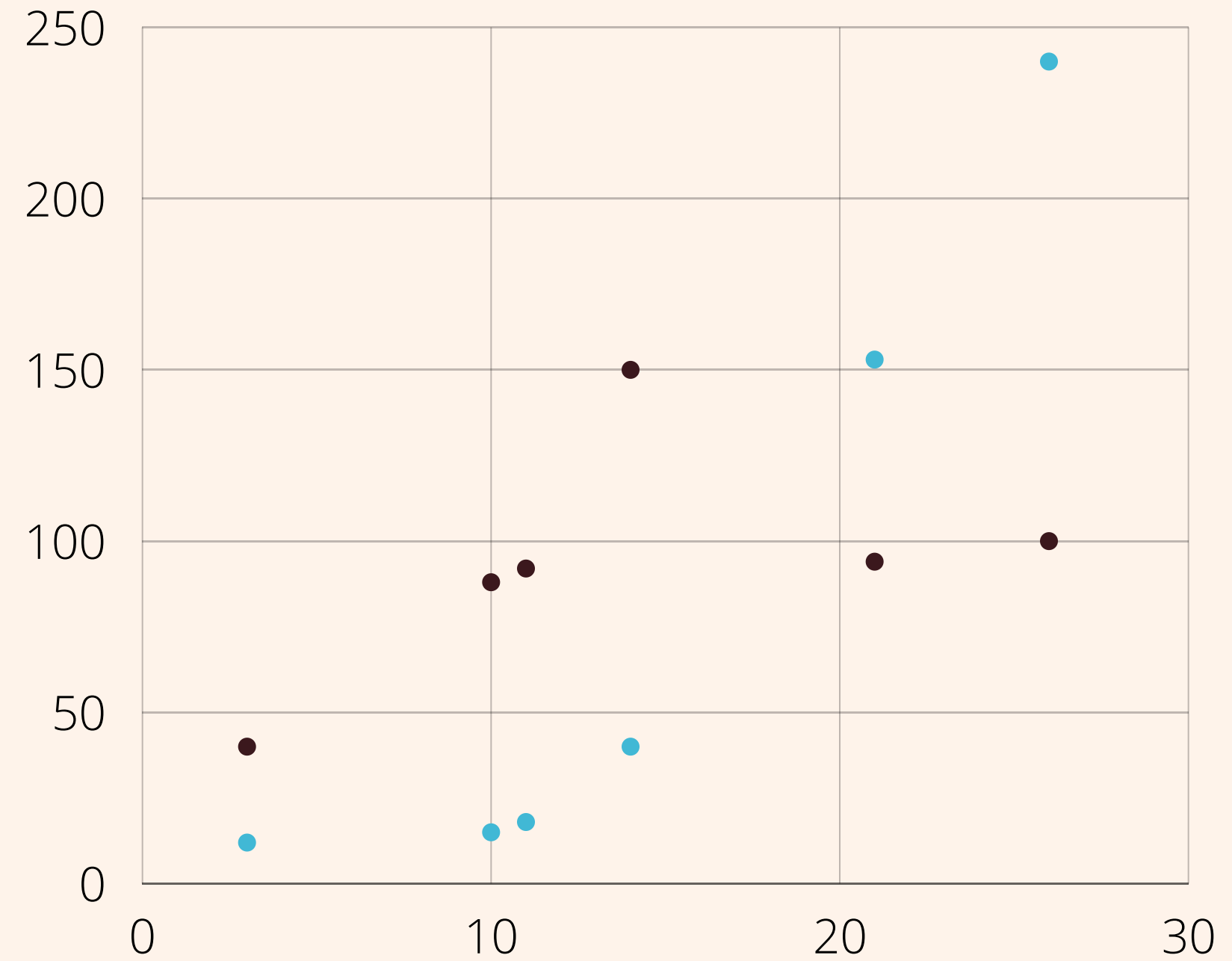
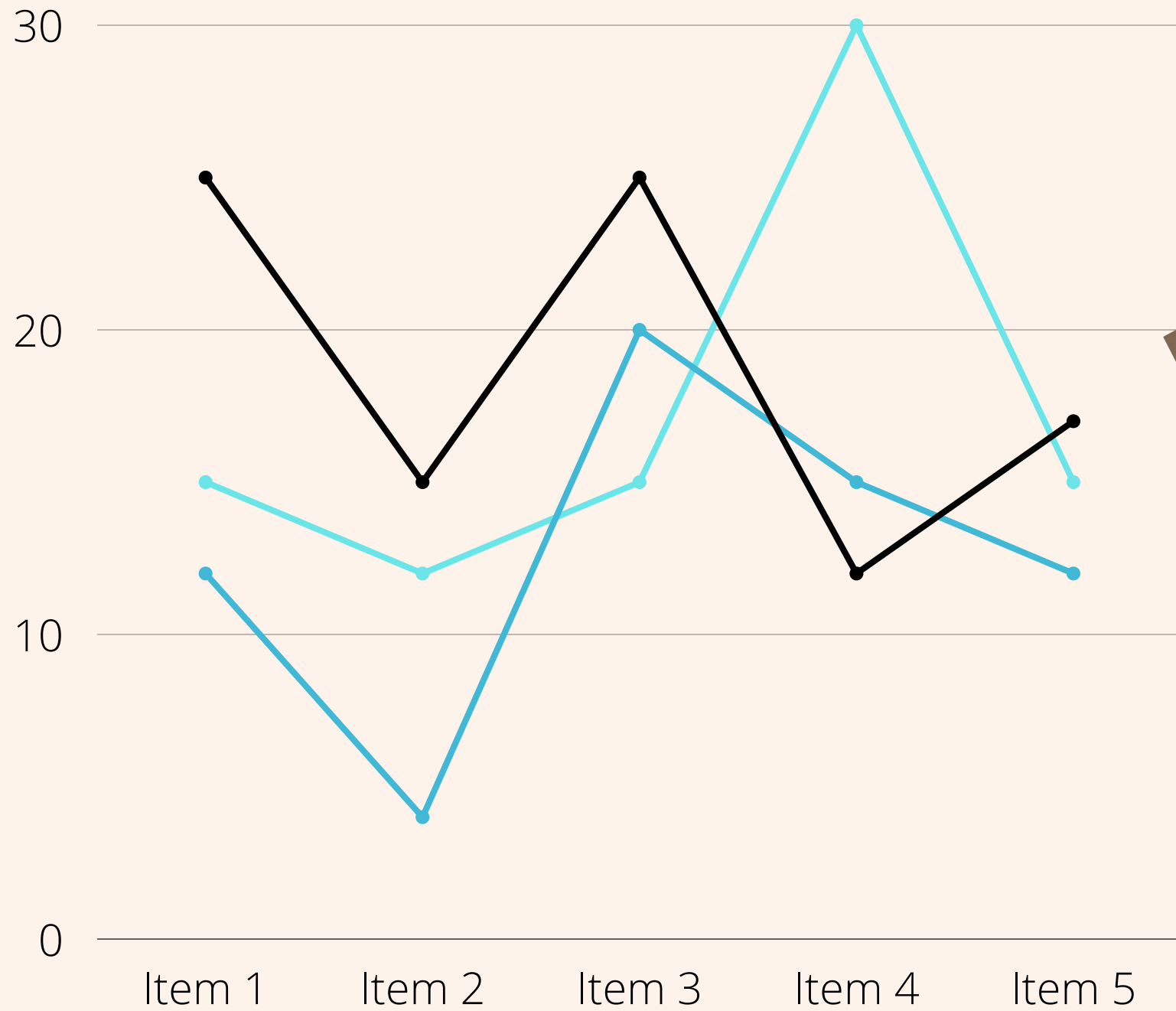
-CRUPI, GREGOVICH AND WHITE, SEPT.23, 2020

**"REYNOLDS ET AL. [27] DOCUMENTED FIVE CASES WHERE HELICOPTER ACTIVITY IN THE EARLY DENNING SEASON CAUSED DEN ABANDONMENT, AND SWENSON ET AL. [18] FOUND THAT DENS ABANDONED IN THE EARLY WINTER LED TO CUB MORTALITY AND TRAVEL UP TO 30 KM TO ESTABLISH A NEW DEN SITE."**

-CRUPI, GREGOVICH AND WHITE, SEPT.23, 2020



# HAINES IS THE ONLY ENTITY MANAGING HELISKIING WITHOUT A STAFF BIOLOGIST-- ADF&G GUIDANCE IS ESSENTIAL





# GPS DATA COLLECTION

NOT CURRENTLY ENFORCEABLE



## CODE

5.24.040 GENERAL PERMIT  
CONDITIONS AND REGULATIONS.

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D. Every permit holder shall use global positioning system ("GPS") equipment capable of tracking and preserving information establishing the route taken by the helicopter to and from the skiing and snowboarding area and all landings. This information shall be cataloged in a manner requested by the borough and provided when requested by the borough during each commercial ski tour season. Borough requests for this information are limited to enforcement of borough-permitted activity.

-VS-

## POLICY

SINCE 2013, BOROUGH  
POLICY STATES:

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"GPS units will be part of the helicopter, operating with flight following or tracking, and be submitted directly through the helicopter operator (e.g. Temsco, Coastal Helicopter)." "The term "part of the helicopter" means: installed into the helicopter, using power from the helicopter, and managed by the pilot."



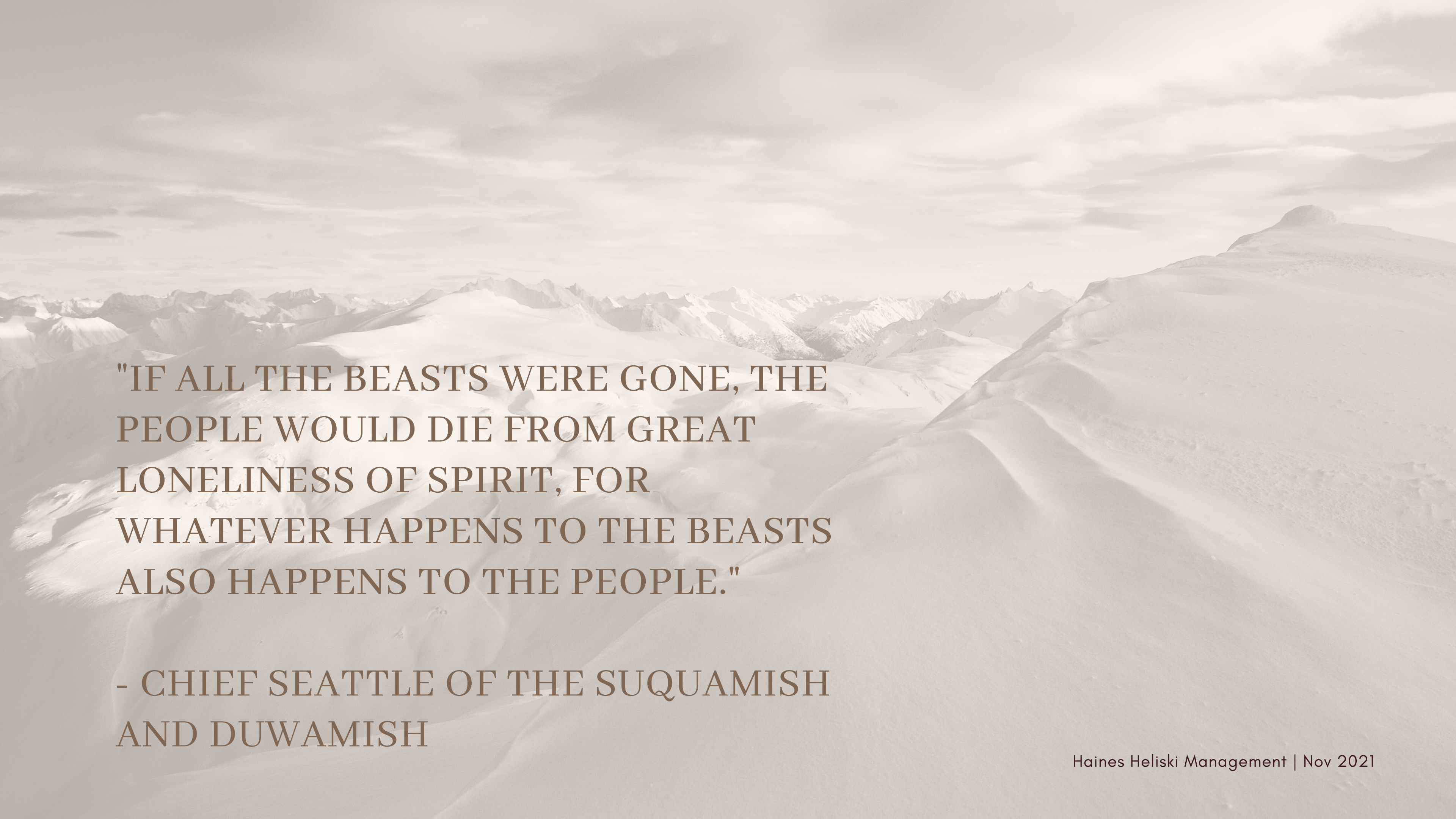


# WITHOUT COMPREHENSIVE GPS DATA SHARING,

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MANAGERS LACK THE INFORMATION  
TO PROTECT WILDLIFE--  
OR TO ASSESS WHETHER  
HELITOURISM IS IMPLICATED IN  
DECLINES





"IF ALL THE BEASTS WERE GONE, THE  
PEOPLE WOULD DIE FROM GREAT  
LONELINESS OF SPIRIT, FOR  
WHATEVER HAPPENS TO THE BEASTS  
ALSO HAPPENS TO THE PEOPLE."

- CHIEF SEATTLE OF THE SUQUAMISH  
AND DUWAMISH