

# STATE OF ALASKA

**SARAH PALIN**  
**GOVERNOR**

**DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME**  
***DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION***

*P.O. BOX 25526*  
*JUNEAU, AK 99802-5526*  
*PHONE: (907) 465-4100*  
*FAX: (907) 465-2332*

TO: Alaska Board of Game Members  
THRU: Kristy Tibbles, Executive Director, Boards Support  
FROM: Kim Titus, Deputy Director  
DATE: February 11, 2008  
SUBJECT: Emergency Petition – extend moose season 30 days near Stebbins/St. Michael

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The Division of Wildlife Conservation (DWC) has reviewed the petition for emergency action submitted to the Board of Game by the IRA Council at Stebbins, Alaska. The petition requests a 30-day extension to hunt moose in the vicinity of the communities of Stebbins and St. Michael. Currently, the winter moose season for residents only is scheduled for Jan. 1 – Jan. 31 and the petition was received one day before the close of the season. The affected area is defined in regulation as the ‘Remainder of Unit 22A’ and includes the portion of Unit 22A south of and including the Golsovia River drainage.

The Department does not have a moose population estimate for the Remainder of Unit 22A, but densities appear to be low and are probably between 0.05 – 0.25 moose/mi<sup>2</sup>. In October 2003, ADF&G and BLM staff flew composition surveys in the area for the first time and found ratios of 50 bulls:100 cows and 67 calves:100 cows. They also discovered that much of the available habitat in the area was not occupied by moose, indicating potential for increased populations of moose. Since the area is remote and not easily accessible, most of the harvest is by residents of Stebbins and St. Michael. Village-based harvest assessment surveys completed in 2003 and 2004 found the two villages harvested a combined total of 25 moose per year. Harvest for the current regulatory year is considered incomplete due to lag in harvest ticket reporting, but reports received to date show 7 bulls have been harvested in the remainder of Unit 22A.

The petition refers to limited access via snow machines to hunting areas due to inclement weather, extreme cold, lack of snow and bare ground conditions that make traveling difficult. This is consistent with our knowledge of weather patterns affecting the Seward Peninsula and western Alaska for the last several months. Additionally, alternative big game species and/or marine mammal resources to harvest are very limited during the current winter season. Muskoxen are not present in this portion of Unit 22 and caribou from the Western Arctic herd are not present on their typical winter range. Winter distribution of caribou varies annually and this year the distribution of radio-collared animals shows that the majority of the herd is located on northern ranges and not in the southern portions of Unit 22A. Marine mammals are not typically harvested during the winter season and are not available for harvest until boating and ice-edge conditions develop as winter changes to spring.

The Joint Board Petition Policy in 5 AAC 96.625(f) defines an emergency as “an unforeseen, unexpected event that either threatens a fish or game resource, or an unforeseen, unexpected resource situation where a biologically allowable resource harvest would be precluded by delayed regulatory action and such delay would be significantly burdensome to the petitioners because the resource would be unavailable in the future.” This is a Board determination.

To address the request for additional hunting opportunity, the department recommends that an antlered bull bag limit be maintained during winter hunting seasons. Any winter season that does not protect cow moose would not be consistent long-term conservation efforts to increase or stabilize moose populations in this area. Should the Board make a finding of emergency and then approve the request, the department would recommend a resident only antlered bull season extending until February 29. If the harvest is not limited to antlered bulls, there could be significant risk of cow harvest, thereby limiting herd growth and better moose hunting opportunity in future years.