

FINAL

ANALYSIS
and
RECOMMENDATIONS
for

BOARD OF GAME PROPOSALS

March 2013 - Region II

Alaska Department of Fish & Game

*Division of Wildlife Conservation and Division of
Subsistence*

March 5, 2013

The department's recommendations are based on analysis of the proposals with available information. These recommendations may change after further analysis based on public comment or additional information.

PROPOSAL 127

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Reauthorize the antlerless moose season in Unit 6A.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Do Not Adopt**

RATIONALE: Staff proposal. Upon reconsideration of the need of an antlerless moose hunt in either portion of Unit 6A in the near future, the department recommends dropping the hunts. The Copper River Prince William Advisory Committee (CRPWS) supported this change.

PROPOSAL 128

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Reauthorize the antlerless moose season in Unit 6B.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Do Not Adopt**

RATIONALE: Staff proposal. Upon reconsideration of the need of an antlerless moose hunt in Unit 6B in the near future, the department recommends dropping the hunt. The CRPWS Advisory Committee supported this change.

PROPOSAL 129

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Reauthorize the antlerless moose season in Unit 6C.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Amend and Adopt**

RATIONALE: Staff proposal, see issue statement. Change hunt structure to allow a drawing hunt followed by an optional registration hunt as follows:

Seasons and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
(4)		
...		
Unit 6(C) season.	Sept. 1-Oct. 31 (General hunt only)	No open
1 moose by drawing permit only; up to 40 permits for bulls and up to 20 permits for antlerless moose		

may be issued

or

1 moose by registration permit only;

Nov. 1 – Dec. 31

No open season

During the 2012 state and federal moose hunts in Unit 6C the department found that a harvestable surplus of moose remained at the end of the regular hunting season. In part, this is because department staff must estimate the available harvest a year in advance of the hunt, moose survived better than anticipated during the severe winter of 2011/12, and there were a number of unfilled tags. The department considered a late season emergency opening for antlerless moose, but did not have support of the CRPWS Advisory Committee and therefore did not pursue it. More flexibility for administration of this hunt would help if this situation occurred again.

The CRPWS Advisory Committee voted to approve antlerless hunting in 6C but did not review the changes proposed above at that meeting. The department supports having this tool available to provide additional hunting opportunity.

PROPOSAL 130

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Change the bag limit in Unit 6D from one black bear (either sex) to one female black bear every two years.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **No Recommendation**

RATIONALE: We do not have estimates of black bear population size or density to determine sustainable harvest of bears in Unit 6D. However, harvest data indicated that when annual harvest is less than 350 bears, the proportion of females in the harvest is near or below our management objective of 25% (Figure 1). Harvest data has also indicated that high harvest density is correlated with reduced skull size, suggesting that harvest was influencing age structure. Guides and outfitters claim that there are fewer large boars available in the last 3-4 seasons compared to a decade ago. The BOG has passed season and methods restrictions over the last decade in an effort to reduce harvest toward 350 bears, but harvest remains at about 450 bears (Figure 1).

This proposal may reduce female harvest somewhat; however, most hunters are not able to distinguish male from female single bears, so there would not be a significant reduction in the overall harvest and there would be little biological impact. It would also make hunt administration more difficult and add enforcement challenges. In our opinion, a registration hunt with a set quota would probably be the most successful method to control harvest if or when it proves necessary. Using a drawing hunt for unguided, nonresident hunters would probably not be adequate because, unlike Units 1 – 3 where nonresident harvest was 50 – 90%, nonresident harvest in Unit 6D is currently only 30 –

35%. By far the largest proportion of successful hunters is Alaska residents using personal (non-commercial) means to access Prince William Sound.

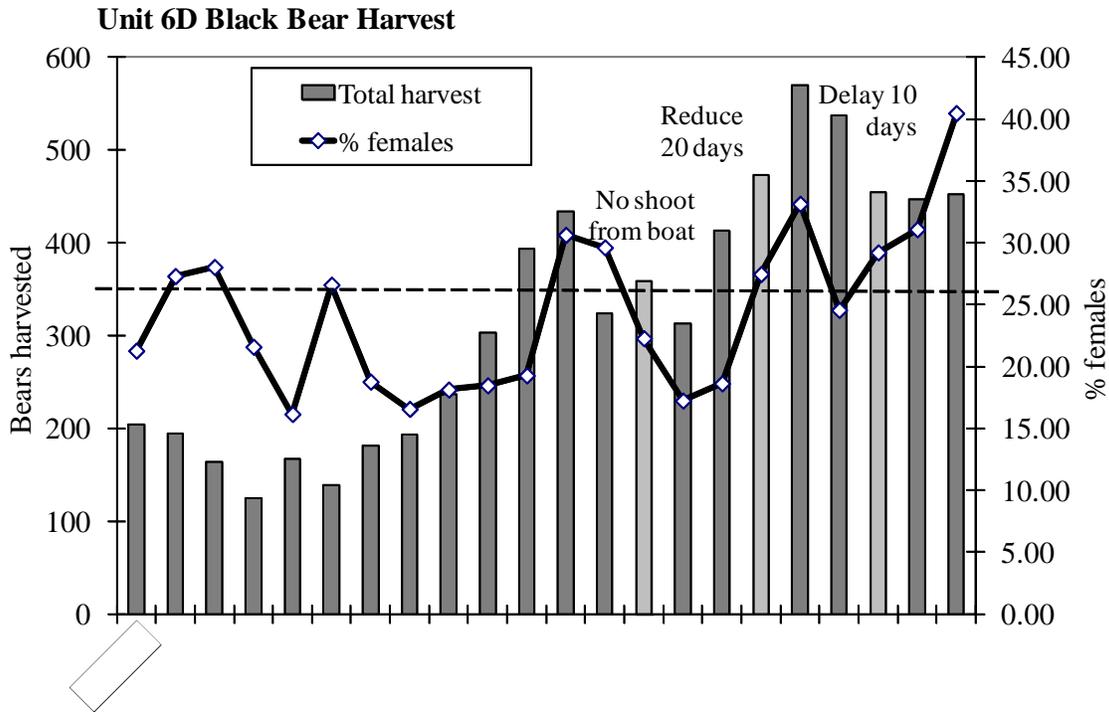


Figure 1. Black bear harvest in Unit 6D, Prince William Sound. The department’s harvest quota target is 350 bears.

PROPOSAL 131

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Reauthorize the antlerless moose hunt for Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER).

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Adopt**

RATIONALE: Department proposal; see issue statement.

PROPOSAL 132

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Reauthorize the antlerless moose hunt in the Twentymile/Portage/Placer hunt area in Units 7 and 14C.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Adopt**

RATIONALE: Department proposal; see issue statement.

PROPOSAL 133

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Reauthorize the antlerless moose hunt in the Anchorage Management Area in Unit 14C.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Adopt**

RATIONALE: Department proposal; see issue statement.

PROPOSAL 134

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Reauthorize the antlerless moose hunts in the Birchwood Management Area and the remainder of Unit 14C.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Adopt**

RATIONALE: Department proposal; see issue statement.

PROPOSAL 135

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Reauthorize the antlerless moose hunt in the upper Ship Creek drainage in Unit 14C.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Adopt**

RATIONALE: Department proposal; see issue statement.

PROPOSAL 136

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Provide department biologists the discretion to reduce the number of drawing hunt permits issued for Dall sheep in Chugach State Park by 50%, and change the bag limit for full-curl sheep to some other bag limit, not defined by the author of the proposal.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Do Not Adopt**

RATIONALE: This proposal requests two changes, 1) to reduce the number of sheep drawing permits, and 2) to remove or relax the full-curl harvest requirement.

Dall sheep hunts in Unit 14C are managed by drawing permit hunts, with separate hunts for residents and nonresidents. Within the boundaries of the codified regulation, it is under the discretionary authority of the department to determine the number of permits

and areas open to sheep hunting. In addition, the department has the discretionary authority to restrict the sex of animal to harvest for conservation purposes. These discretionary authorities are typically used by biologists in response to fluctuations in wildlife populations. Since 2002, we have annually reduced the number of permits available in response to a population decline based on area survey results, and starting in 2009 we suspended all ewe hunting. Currently, in Unit 14C ewes or rams less than full-curl can only legally be harvested in archery-only permit hunts. Current archery hunts have little to no effect on the total population (Figure 1). Since 1993, archery harvest has never exceeded 1% of the total estimated sheep population.

Since 2009 the Dall sheep population in Unit 14C has exceeded 1,000 sheep, with the most recent estimate in 2011 at 1,050 sheep (Figure 1). In 2011, 56 full-curl ram rifle permits were issued and 11 full-curl rams were harvested (23% success rate). In addition, 87 any sheep archery only permits were issued which resulted in a harvest of 3 ewes and 3 less than full-curl rams (7% success rate). In 2012, 53 full-curl ram rifle permits were issued, and 13 full-curl rams were harvested (35% success rate). No sheep were harvested in 2012 in the archery hunts. Since 1993, the total harvest of total sheep in Unit 14C has averaged 3% and therefore should not impact the overall population status or growth. Also, the harvest of full-curl rams is believed to have negligible impact on overall population stability.

This proposal would provide department biologists with discretionary authority to set permit numbers, an authority that the department already possesses. However, this proposal also suggests a 50% reduction in the number of permits. The author also recommends an undefined bag limit change. Because this proposal strives to provide department biologists with discretionary authority already possessed by the department, and is unclear on the exact change in bag limit desired, we do not think this proposal is necessary.

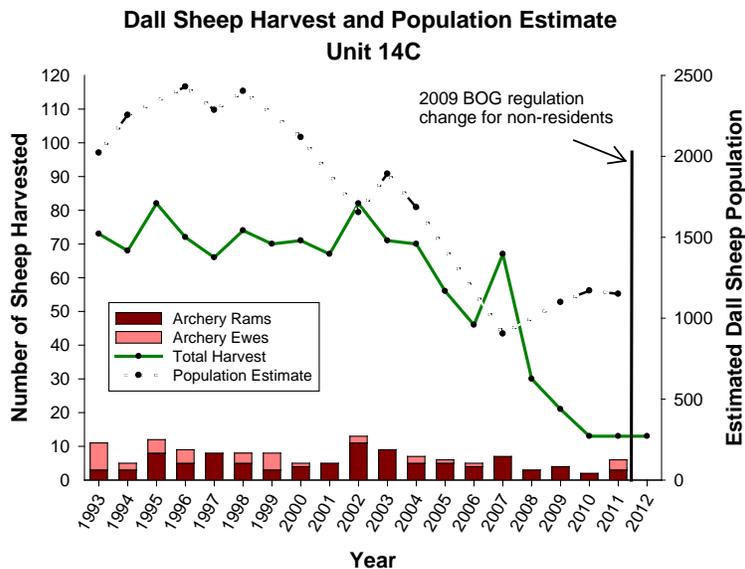


Figure 1. Dall sheep harvest and population estimates for Unit 14C (1993-2012).

PROPOSAL 137

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Require at least 3 drawing permits and no more than 6 drawing permits be issued for DS123.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Do not Adopt**

RATIONALE: In 2005, the Board of Game opened a previously closed area in Chugach State Park to sheep hunting, an action which allowed for the creation of DS123 (Figure 1). The creation of this hunt was a cooperative effort between ADF&G, the public, the Chugach State Park Advisory Board, and the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation. Within this area, Chugach State Park has to specifically authorize the discharge of firearms permits for hunters.

Only 1 drawing permit per year has been issued for DS123, which allows 2 hunters, the DS123 permit holder and the recipient of the governor’s tag, to hunt a full-curl ram in the DS123 hunt area. The current practice of opening this area to only 2 hunters over the entire season (August 10-September 30) is to enhance the quality of the governor’s tag hunt. In addition, allowing only a very small number of hunters to harvest sheep in the DS123 hunt area has helped mitigate potential conflicts with other park users. Both Chugach State Park and the Chugach State Park Advisory Board supported this hunt, in part, due to assurance that only two hunters would be permitted to take rams in this area. Currently, the Chugach State Park Advisory Board does not support opening this hunt area to additional permits. Opening this area to additional permits would decrease the overall value to the governor’s tag and could result in conflict with other user groups in this small hunt area.

According to State Regulation 5 AAC 92.052. (7), department biologists may limit the number of permittees hunting during the same time period and can restrict the area to be hunted. This authority allows us to establish the number of permits based on the current population status. Currently, up to 240 full-curl ram only permits can be issued for Dall sheep in Unit 14C. In 2012, we issued 56 permits for full-curl rams, including 1 resident-only permit for DS123. In addition the Governor’s tag was utilized in Unit 14C.

As the population of sheep fluctuate, it is possible that the area would not sustain a harvest of 3 full-curl rams. We have dramatically reduced and completely eliminated full-curl permits in some areas due to low numbers of full-curl rams. We already have the authority to increase the permit numbers for DS123; however, placing a minimum number of tags that we must issue would either require us to reduce permit numbers for other hunts or issue permits for an area where hunting success would be extremely limited due to lack of full-curls.

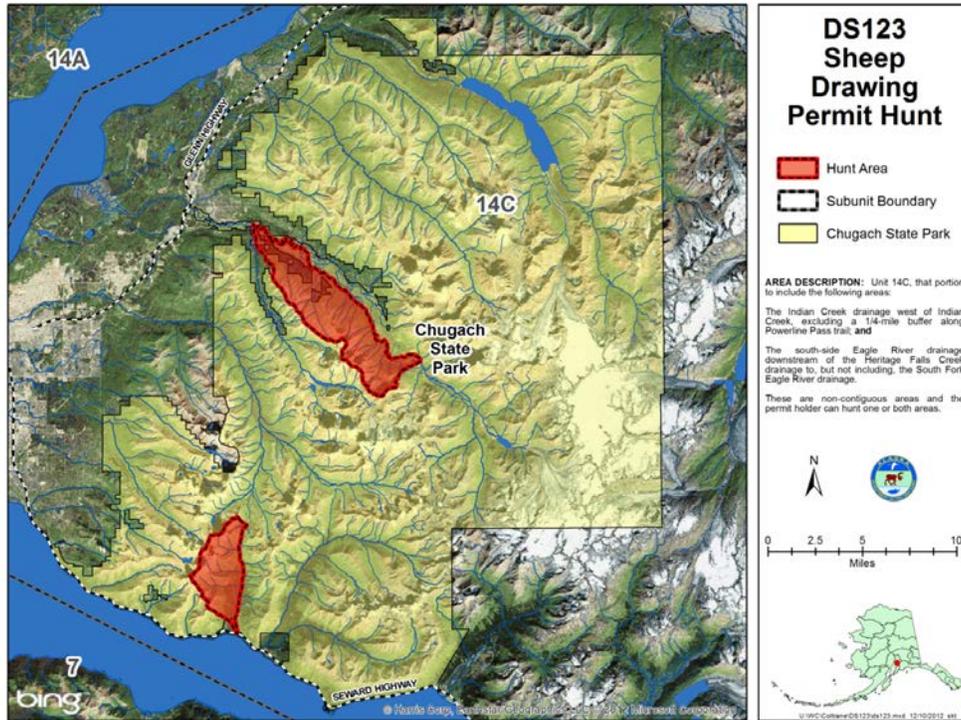


Figure 1. Current boundaries of sheep hunt area DS123.

PROPOSAL 138

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Create a new drawing permit hunt for full-curl rams in Chugach State Park in the drainages of Falls Creek, the south fork of Eagle River, McHugh Creek, north and south forks of Campbell Creek, Rainbow Creek, and Rabbit Creek.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Take No Action**

RATIONALE: See rationale for proposal 139. Dall sheep within Unit 14C are managed by separate drawing permit hunts for resident and nonresident hunters. The majority of areas occupied by Dall sheep are already open to sheep hunting, with a few exceptions. Most of the areas that are currently not open for sheep hunting are either areas valued for viewing purposes or areas that typically do not support older rams. Specifically, these areas include the drainages of McHugh Creek, the north and south forks of Campbell Creek, Rainbow Creek, and the South Fork of Eagle River.

The drainages of Campbell Creek are within the front range of Chugach State Park, which is heavily used by hikers, skiers, and mountain bikers. One of the most popular areas to view sheep, typically ewes, is a large bowl adjacent to Little O’Malley Peak within the Campbell Creek drainage. Opening areas such as these to hunting would conflict with high levels of sheep viewing activities in the park. Previous Board of Game action has sought to minimize such conflicts in this area. Rabbit Creek is also within the

highly developed and heavily utilized front range of the park and is a narrow drainage which does not typically harbor sheep. Based on recent surveys, the South Fork of Eagle River typically maintains less than 10 sheep, and rarely rams. While there are sheep, including groups of rams, in the McHugh Creek drainage, the majority of these sheep are found in the vicinity of McHugh Lake and along the ridgeline between McHugh and Rainbow Creeks. These sheep also frequent Rainbow Creek drainage, which we support opening to hunting in Proposal 139.

We recommend not adopting this proposal in light of our recommendation for Proposal 139, in which we add additional areas, including Falls Creek and Rainbow Creek, to an existing hunt (DS123). The remaining areas recommended in this proposal do not support substantial numbers of full-curl rams.

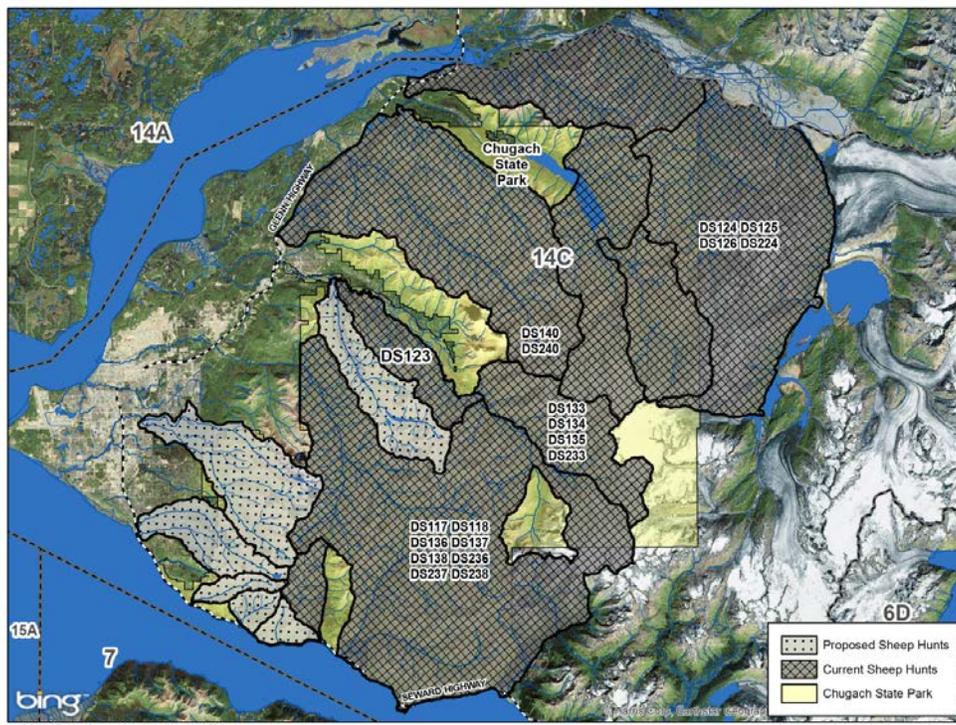


Figure 1. Proposed new sheep hunt areas within Unit 14C.

PROPOSAL 139

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Expand the hunt area for DS123 in GMU 14C to include Ram Valley in Eagle River.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Take No Action**

RATIONALE: While the department can make these changes using our discretionary authority we feel it is important for the board to approve this significant change. Dall sheep are managed by drawing permit hunts in GMU 14C, with separate hunts for

residents and nonresident hunters. The bag limit for most of these permits hunts are for full-curl rams or larger, with the exception of four archery-only permit hunts, which have a bag limit of any sheep.

DS123 is a resident-only drawing permit hunt in GMU 14C with a bag limit of 1 full-curl ram or larger and season dates of August 10 through September 30. This hunt was created to provide an opportunity for one permit holder to have a chance to harvest previously unobtainable rams in a few small areas of Chugach State Park. Furthermore, by opening these areas to a permit hunt, the areas also became accessible to the recipient of the governor's tag for Dall sheep in Unit 14C.

Currently, the hunt area for DS123 includes: 1) Indian Creek drainage west of Indian Creek, excluding a ¼ mile buffer from Powerline Pass Trail, and 2) the south side of Eagle River drainage downstream of Heritage Falls Creek drainage for, but not including, the South Fork Eagle River drainage (Figure 1). When this hunt was initially created, a third area, Ram Valley, was included in the hunt area; however, after an illegal sheep was killed by a hunter in the wrong hunt area in front of other park users in Ram Valley, this area was removed from DS123 in 2009.

Since 2009 the Dall sheep population in Unit 14C has exceeded 1,000 sheep, with the most recent estimate in 2011 at 1,050 sheep (Figure 2). In 2011, 56 full-curl ram rifle permits were issued and 11 full-curl rams were harvested (23% success rate). In addition, 86 any sheep archery only permits were issued which resulted in a harvest of 3 ewes and 3 less than full-curl rams (13% success rate). In 2012, 53 full-curl ram rifle permits were issued, and 13 full-curl rams were harvested (35% success rate). No sheep were harvested in 2012 in the archery hunts.

We recommend the following changes to DS123 to allow for better opportunity to harvest a world class full-curl ram with no adverse impact to the sheep population in Unit 14C:

1. Reinstate Ram Valley to the hunt area for DS123 (Figure 3). While there are only a few sheep that frequent Ram Valley, in recent years, there have been several large rams in the area.
2. Open Falls and Rainbow Creek drainages to the permit recipient of DS123 (Figure 3). Rams within the Indian Creek drainage often cross the ridgeline into Falls Creek, where they become inaccessible to hunting. While this is a common sheep viewing area, a maximum of 2 hunters would have access to this area, and we do not anticipate a conflict with other park users. Rainbow Valley also supports a limited number of rams that are currently not subject to hunting pressure. Opening these additional areas would increase hunting opportunity, have no biological impact on the population as a whole, and should not be in conflict with other park users.

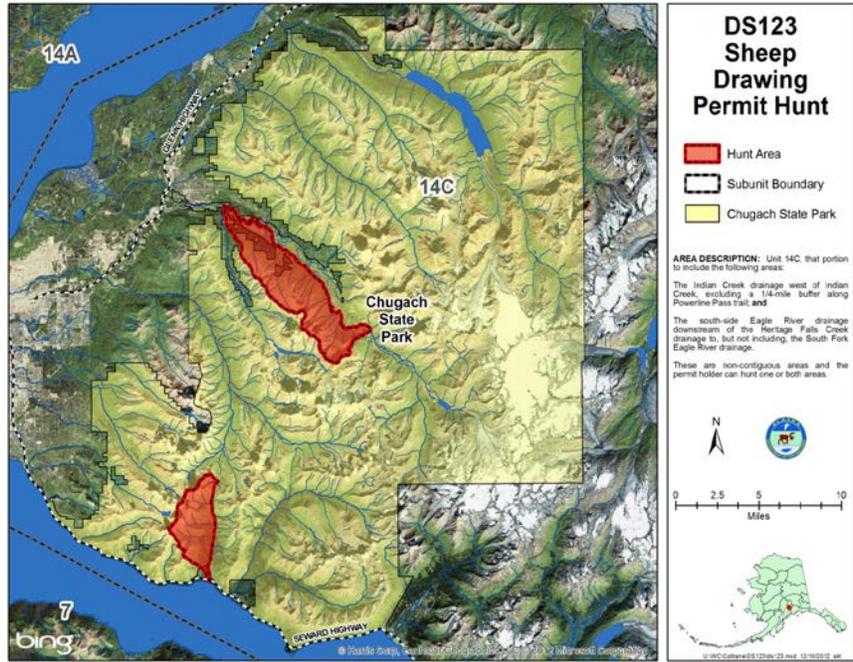


Figure 1. Current boundaries of sheep hunt area DS123.

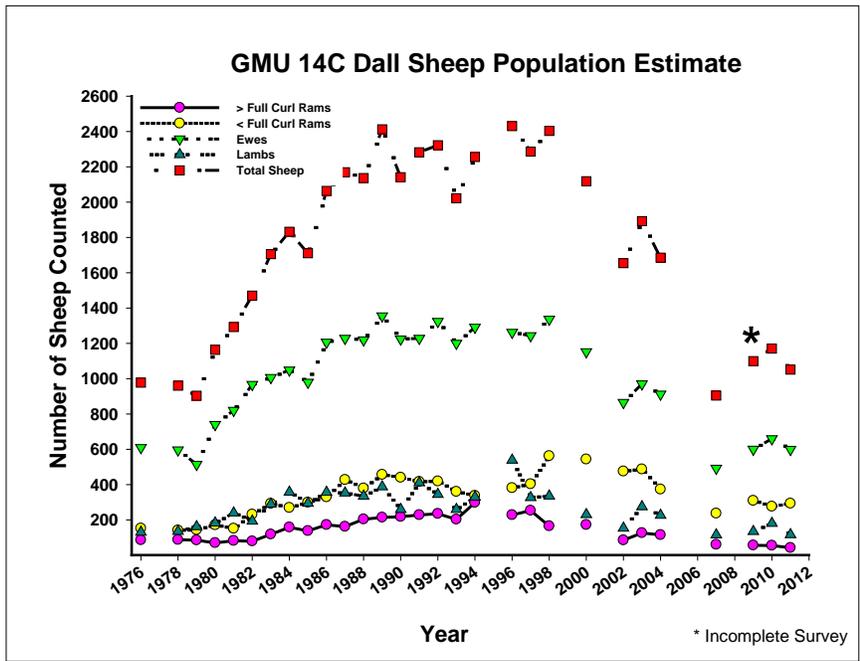


Figure 2. Sheep population estimates, by sex and age, within Unit 14C (1976-2012).

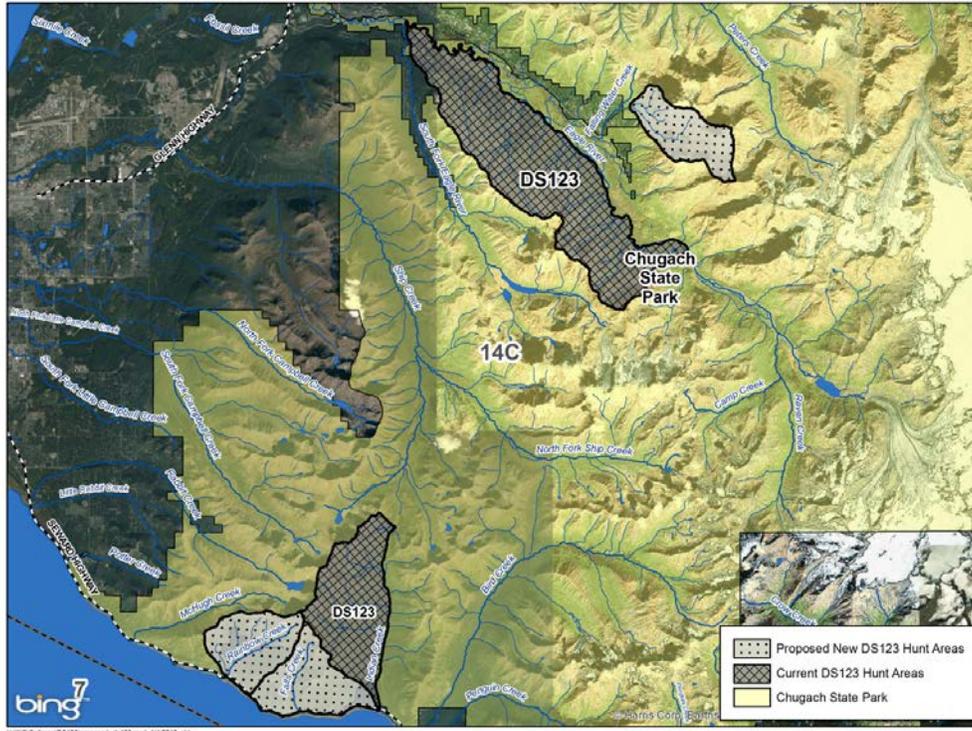


Figure 3. Proposed amendment to the boundaries of sheep hunt area DS123.

PROPOSAL 140

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Reduce the nonresident deer hunting season outside of the Kodiak road system by 92 days (October 1 – December 1) and reduce the nonresident bag limit to 1 buck and the resident bag limit to 2 bucks. Seasons and bag limits for Federal subsistence hunters (Unit 8 residents hunting on Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge) would be unchanged.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **No Recommendation**

RATIONALE: Deer are an important subsistence, economic and recreational resource on the Kodiak islands. Transplanted from southeastern Alaska in the 1920s, deer spread throughout the archipelago, and reached an historic high of more than 100,000 in the early 1980s. They are subject to periodic population crashes during winters with extended periods of deep snow or subfreezing temperatures at sea level. In most cases, population recovery seems to be more a factor of winter severity than of regulatory actions.

Sitka black-tailed deer are listed as a species important for human consumption (5 AAC 92.108), and the current management objective for Unit 8 is to sustain a population that includes 70,000 - 75,000 deer and will support an annual harvest of 8,000 – 8,500 deer. There is a positive customary and traditional use finding for deer in GMU 8, with an amount reasonably necessary for subsistence of 3,600–4,100 (5 AAC 99.025 (a) (5)). The Kodiak

Advisory Committee has consistently recommended that the primary goal be to manage for meat production, and the secondary goal as trophy production.

During the winter of 2011/12, the Unit 8 deer population experienced the worst decline since 1998/99, with at least 50 percent of the population dying. Mortality rates varied around the Unit, with the east side of Kodiak Island being the hardest hit. The current population estimate for Unit 8 is roughly half the management objective. Practical and effective methods available to enhance Unit 8 deer populations remain the same as reported by the department to the Board of Game on January 14, 2000:

“Sitka black-tailed deer on the Kodiak archipelago are an introduced ungulate using an island habitat. There are no natural predators and the vegetation evolved in the absence of any indigenous herbivores (except for seasonal use by brown bears). Consequently, the deer population is prone to dramatic population swings. Hunting is usually compensatory for annual winter mortality, which occurs when deer are forced onto beaches by snow and /or cold temperatures. This situation does not lend itself to active management practices to enhance deer populations.

Predator control by reducing bear populations would be ineffective and politically unfeasible. Reducing feral dog populations would enhance deer survival in localized areas, but measurable benefits to the population as a whole would probably be insignificant.

There are no proven methods for enhancing range or improving deer nutritional status on the Kodiak archipelago. Any attempts to enhance range conditions would be expensive and strictly experimental. A program to encourage private landowners to protect and enhance old growth forest ecosystems would be helpful, but the benefits would be limited to portions of Afognak Island.

The Division’s evaluation suggests that intensive management as defined in AS 16.05.255 would not be cost effective for increasing deer numbers in Unit 8. The Department recommends that the Board support the current management strategy, which promotes natural recovery. Past experience indicates that this population has recovered quickly on its own if weather conditions were favorable and more conservative regulations were enacted.”

In fall 2012, members of the Kodiak Fish and Game Advisory Committee voted unanimously (14-0) to oppose any in-season Emergency Order to reduce deer season or bag limit. They have not yet convened to consider any regulatory changes to encourage restoration of the population next year. After the last significant deer population reduction (1998/99) the Committee recognized the impacts of winter weather on recovery, and concerns about habitat degradation caused by localized overpopulation as they evaluated the status of the population and the need for continued conservative measures.

The current regulations were put in place to allow recovery from the dramatic population decline in 1998/99. When coupled with a series of mild winters, the result was a rebound in deer herds in most areas within 4-5 years. The biological rationale behind this proposal is sound assuming an absence of severe winters, and it may expedite recovery; however, it

would have significant adverse impact on non-local hunters and may not be necessary for the long-term health of the population.

PROPOSAL 141

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Increase harvest opportunities on a growing portion of the Kodiak goat herd by:

- 1) extending the mountain goat hunting season in the southwest Kodiak registration hunt (RG480) by about 90 days (August 20 – March 20);
- 2) increase the bag limit to 2 goats (only one in the field at a time); and,
- 3) create a separate bag limit for goats in RG480 that does not count against other goat areas.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Adopt - season extension.**

No Recommendation - bag limit changes.

RATIONALE: Kodiak Island is currently the most popular goat hunting destination in Alaska, accounting for approximately 1/3 of the statewide goat harvest. With the increase in permit numbers and harvest there has been a demographic shift of goat hunters on Kodiak. In RY04, local hunters composed 52% of the hunters afield compared to 33% in RY11, while numbers of resident nonlocal hunters afield increased considerably during the same time frame (39% in RY04; 55% in RY11). The increased nonlocal hunter participation was a result of liberalizing the registration hunt on the southwest end of the island and the elimination of drawing hunts in this area during RY10.

We have reached a pivotal point in goat management on Kodiak as the population now occupies most, if not all, suitable habitat, and populations in many areas continue to increase. We are shifting our emphasis from encouraging range expansion and increased densities, to limiting the population to a level that will provide sustained hunting opportunities while maintaining habitat quality. The addition of late season registration hunts has enhanced our ability to increase hunter opportunity and stabilize goat numbers, but these measures have not sufficiently increased harvest, so we have a chance to consider other alternatives that will provide safe and non-wasteful ways of enhancing hunter opportunities.

Registration goat hunt RG480 encompasses the southwestern half of Kodiak Island and includes an estimated 1,450 mountain goats. The goat population has increased rapidly since they became established in the area about 25 years ago. Access points include numerous small alpine lakes and marine beaches, and normal one-way flight times from Kodiak city range from 30 – 60 minutes. Hunting regulations have been liberalized in recent years to encourage hunter participation. The entire area is currently open from August 20 – December 15, by registration permit (one goat). Permits are available on-line and at selected department offices. Resident and nonresident hunters may participate, but nonresidents must be accompanied by a registered guide. Over the last 3

years, an average of 439 permits has been issued annually and the average harvest has been 79 goats. Liberalized harvests have resulted in a relatively stable goat population in the eastern portion of the hunt area, but goat numbers continue to increase in the western portion.

The first part of this proposal suggests extending the season through December, January, February and March. During much of this period day length and weather make access difficult; however, local villagers and commercial fishermen may be able to effectively participate in the hunt. This is also a time when goats in many areas occupy low elevation and beach areas due to high snow levels in other areas. Hide quality would be excellent, however meat quality would probably deteriorate as the season progressed into spring. Brown bear hunting season commences on April 1, but most hunting does not start until April 15. Temporal separation of goat and bear seasons is intended to minimize the opportunity to harvest bears that might be attracted to wounded or recently butchered goat carcasses.

The second part of the proposal seeks to increase the goat bag limit in RG480 from one to two goats, however only one harvested goat may be in the field at a time. Nowhere in Alaska is there a two goat bag limit. In most areas, including northern and eastern Kodiak, the department manages goat harvests very conservatively to assure sustainable populations. The rapid expansion in both area and numbers in RG480 provides an opportunity for increased harvest, however high transportation costs associated with killing only one goat limits participation. Doubling the bag limit would presumably attract more hunters. Due to the terrain typically occupied by goats, there was concern about: 1) hunters taking unwise shots while attempting to take two goats concurrently by a single hunter; 2) difficulty retrieving and caring for meat from two goats taken a long way from a pick-up point; and, 3) increased danger of adverse bear interactions in difficult terrain caused by goat meat left in the field. To surmount these concerns, the proposal includes a provision that the first goat taken must be retrieved, taken back to a pick-up point and taken out of the field before a second goat could be taken.

The third part of the proposal separates the RG480 bag limit from goats taken in other hunt areas. This is presented as another incentive for goat hunters to participate in this particular hunt, by allowing them to take a goat in any other hunt area either before or after successfully harvesting a goat in RG480.

Both the individual and the cumulative impacts of the segments of this proposal are unknown but anticipated to be successful in increasing harvest in RG480. We anticipate there will be localized overharvest in accessible areas such as alpine lakes where floatplanes can ferry hunters, and some low elevation areas where goats may congregate next to an accessible beach. Based on goat movement patterns in recent years, we expect these areas to eventually be re-populated by goats in adjacent areas. This harvest strategy is probably not sustainable in the long-term, but it may be effective in reducing goat numbers to a more desirable level, after which more conservative regulations can be proposed.

This proposal was developed with joint representation from the Kodiak Fish and Game Advisory Committee and the Kodiak/Aleutians Federal Regional Advisory Committee in close coordination with department and Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge staff, as well as other local residents. The logic and biology behind the proposal is sound and represents a viable way of increasing hunter opportunity without jeopardizing the goat population; however, the concept of a unique bag limit for RG480 would be a major change in statewide regulations.

PROPOSAL 142

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Clarification of the definition of “take” of mountain goats harvested in Unit 8.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **No Recommendation**

RATIONALE: Each year an undetermined number of mountain goats are shot and wounded. Some of these goats are mortally wounded and not recovered, but they are not reported in the harvest and hunters may, in effect, be able to kill more than one bag limit per season. Adoption of this regulation would reduce these instances and strongly encourage hunters to carefully select their shots and make every effort possible to recover wounded goat. Enforcement of this regulation would be difficult and rely mostly upon the honesty of the hunter. Implementation of the regulation would encourage a widely accepted ethical practice and be consistent with the regulations passed for Unit 8 brown bears in 2007 and elk in 2011.

This proposal was developed with joint representation from the Kodiak Fish and Game Advisory Committee and the Kodiak/Aleutians Federal Regional Advisory Committee in close coordination with department and Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge staff, as well as other local residents.

PROPOSAL 143

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Modifies the bag limit for general season bull moose to 50” or greater antler spread or 3 or more brow tines on at least one side in Units 7 and 15 within the nonsubsistence area as described at 5 AAC 99.015. The current regulations for the general season are a bull with a 50” or greater antler spread or 4 or more brow tines on at least one side.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Amend and Adopt**

RATIONALE: The current 50 inch-4 brow tine antler regulation was adopted by the Board of Game at the March 2011 meeting. At that time, the department stated we would continue to monitor the moose populations and consider possible liberalizations at the March 2013 Board of Game meeting if bull:cow ratios improved. Our surveys have

indicated that the bull:cow ratios have increased in both GMU's 15A and 15C and we are within our management objectives of 20 bulls:100 cows in 15A, and 15 bulls:100 cows in 15C. Since the 2010 survey (9 bulls:100 cows) the bull:cow ratio has increased (22 bulls:100 cows during November 2012 counts in 15C) given the near absence of hunting the past 2 years. The department agrees with the liberalized antler restriction identified in this proposal (50 inch spread or at least 3 brow tines on at least one side) but recommends the following amendments:

- 1) Change the General season dates from August 20-September 20 to September 1-20. We suggest returning to the pre SF50 season dates to allow antlers additional time to fully develop. Most moose taken in August exhibit antlers that have not finished growing and some hunters have difficulty determining configuration of antlers in velvet.
- 2) Change the archery-only season dates in units 15A and 15B from August 10-17 to August 22-29. This will maintain the existing season length for archers but also will allow extra time for antler development. While some antlers will still be in velvet the proposed season dates will not change the existing season length.
- 3) Include bulls that have a spike antler on at least one side as a legal bull for harvest. From 2006-2010 (the last 5 years of the spike/fork 50 inch or 3 brow tine regulation), 54% of the yearling harvest (assuming the spike or fork antlered bulls were yearlings) in 15A and 62% of the yearling harvest in 15C was from bulls that had a fork on one side and a fork or larger on the other. The department believes the moose population in GMU's 7 and 15 could withstand adding spike antlered bulls for harvest, while still allowing for adequate recruitment of yearling bulls into the population.
- 4) Retain the sealing requirement for bull moose harvested in GMU's 7 and 15. This will allow the department to monitor the harvest and obtain antler data.

The 50 inch 4 brow tine regulation resulted in a 90% decrease in harvest (15A and 15C bull harvest was 333 in 2010 compared to 34 in 2012) resulting in improvements to our bull:cow ratios. We are currently within management objectives regarding this ratio. While we believe it is premature to go back to the 1987-2010 regulations (50 inch, or at least 3 brow tines or spike or fork antler on at least one side), we do see an opportunity to allow some liberalization compared to current restrictions.

In summary, the department recommends to amend this proposal to have a general season from September 1-20 and Archery only season from August 22-29, allow for harvest of bulls with a 50 inch antler spread, or at least 3 brow tines or a spike on at least one side during both seasons. GMU 15A and 15C will continue to be closed to nonresidents under this proposed amendment. We recognize the season dates have been shortened but the liberalizations of the antler restrictions will offset some of the lost hunting time. The bag limit would remain 1 moose per regulatory year and we would retain the requirement to seal antlers from bull moose harvested in GMU's 7 and 15.

PROPOSAL 144

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Maintains current antler restrictions in Unit 7 and 15 through the 2014 season.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Take No Action**

RATIONALE: See department recommendation and rationale for proposal 143

PROPOSAL 145

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Modifies the bag limit for moose (presumably in Units 7 and 15) to allow for 50” or 4 brow tines on at least one side, allows for a spike bull to be legal if the bull:cow ratio has increased and asks for a closure to nonresident moose hunting. Additionally, this proposal asks for moose habitat enhancement by prescribed burns, crushing, and pruning vegetation, a brown bear registration hunt September 1-30, and increased predator control on wolves to proper management levels.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Take No Action**

RATIONALE: See department recommendation and rationale for proposal 143. The Board passed an intensive management plan focused on habitat improvements for Unit 15A in March 2010, while recognizing that only land owners have the authority to conduct prescribed burns. While the department continues to work with land managers, we do not have the authority to conduct prescribed burns or other habitat improvements without the consent of the land owner. The Board closed the nonresident moose season in intensive management Units 15A and 15C in March 2011. The department’s comments regarding the brown bear season are included in proposal 153. Aerial predator control of wolves was authorized by the Board in January 2012 and the department is currently evaluating feasibility of such a program.

PROPOSAL 146

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Considers modifications to the current season dates and bag limit for moose in Units 7 and 15. Possible action to be considered include no change, a more liberal general season, a limited drawing hunt for bulls, reinstate the spike-fork 50” or 3 brow tine regulation but have the spike-fork portion be eliminated for 2 seasons when the bull:cow ratio falls below objective levels for 2 consecutive years, change season dates, allow spike bulls to be harvested, initiate a limited drawing hunt for cows in areas that can sustain the harvest.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Take No Action**

RATIONALE: See department recommendation and rationale for proposal 143.

PROPOSAL 147

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Suspends aerial wolf control in Unit 15A and modifies the intensive management objectives

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **No recommendation**

RATIONALE: Unit 15A encompasses about 1,300 mi² of the north western portion of the Kenai Peninsula. Historically, the moose population and harvest in Unit 15A has fluctuated due to habitat induced changes from large wildfires and, more recently, with differences in winter severity. In the last 65 years, there have been two large fires in Unit 15A; one in 1947 (over 300,000 acres) and one in 1969 (over 73,000 acres). Generally, moose densities and harvests peaked 15-20 years after each fire then decreased with the reduction and availability of quality moose browse.

The current Intensive Management population objective for Unit 15A is 3,000-3,500 moose (or 2.3-2.7 moose/mi²). The upper end of this range approximates the point estimate (3,432) of a census conducted in February of 1991 (22 years after the 1969 burn). This objective was chosen based on past population densities supported by quality post-fire habitat. While these objectives were achieved periodically in the past, managers recognize that without another large scale fire or substantial habitat alteration, the habitat may not be capable of sustaining a moose population at this level.

While the department is exploring means to increase habitat productivity, given the growth of the human population, expansion of residences and seasonal cabins, increased infrastructure associated with gas and oil facilities, and proximity to Anchorage, the likelihood of a large scale controlled burn occurring in Unit 15A is minimal. To illustrate this point, during May 2010, a lightning strike started a fire in an area that was designated limited suppression (let burn). However, given the dry conditions, weather patterns, and the number of fires burning in other portions of the State (lack of support crews and equipment to suppress the fire if needed), the decision was made to extinguish the fire. Without periodic (every 20-30 years) major fires (50,000 acres or more) or proactive action by the USFWS to enhance moose habitat on the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge (formally the Kenai Moose Range), expecting to maintain a density of 2.3-2.7 moose/mi² may not be realistic. The last census conducted in 2008 resulted in a density of 1.3 moose/mi². The Department is working on a variety of moose habitat enhancement projects off Refuge lands in this area.

Nutritional indices (pregnancy rates and rump fat depth) from captures conducted in 2006-2008 showed that cow moose in Unit 15A were in poor condition relative to those in an adjacent study area in Unit 7. Also, results from recent moose captures (February/March 2012 and November 2012) showed that moose in Unit 15A were in

poor condition compared to moose in Unit 15C where a 2010 census resulted in an estimated density of about 2.5 moose/mi².

The average number of moose that were killed annually on the highways in Unit 15A during the last 5 years (2007/08 – 2011/12) was 93 with a range of 45 – 137.

During November 2011, the department hired pilots to conduct a wolf census in Unit 15. The resulting wolf population estimates were 60-62 wolves in 15A, 40-46 wolves in 15B, and 44-52 wolves in 15C. Wolf harvest during the 2011/12 season included 10 in Unit 15A (16% -17% of the preseason population estimate), 6 in Unit 15B (13% - 15% of the preseason population estimate), and 21 in Unit 15C (40% - 48% of the preseason population estimate). The department will conduct another wolf census when conditions allow 2013. When we have collected the baseline information the Department will make a decision as to how to implement the wolf control program

PROPOSAL 148

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Reauthorizes antlerless moose season in a portion of Unit 15C.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Adopt**

RATIONALE: Antlerless moose seasons must be re-authorized annually. The Homer bench land in Unit 15(C) often holds high moose densities in winters when deep snow pushes moose into human populated areas. Even without deep snow, moose die due to malnutrition, and negative interactions with humans are common as moose become aggressive in their search for food near residences. Fifty permits were issued in each of the last 10 years resulting in an average harvest of 23 cows per year.

In March 2012, the Board of Game authorized an intensive management program including aerial wolf control, but DM 549 (the antlerless hunt) boundaries fall outside of the predator control area.

No surveys were conducted in 2012 due to low snow conditions. In November 2011 however, 344 moose were counted and 26% were calves (39 calves:100 cows, 14 bulls:100 cows) in a partial survey of the hunt area. The winter of 2011-2012 was severe in much of south-central Alaska. Even so, we did not see a substantial increase in negative human moose interactions or winter kills in this area and we recommend reauthorization of this antlerless hunt which provides additional opportunity to harvest moose and has negligible impact on the Unit 15C moose population.

PROPOSAL 149

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Reauthorizes antlerless moose season in a portion of Unit 15C.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Take No Action**

RATIONALE: See Proposal 148 for rationale.

PROPOSAL 150

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Modify the Lower Kenai Controlled Use Area restrictions.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **No Recommendation**

RATIONALE: This proposal addresses an allocation issue. The Lower Kenai Controlled Use Area (LKCUA) was established in 1985 to reduce hunting pressure in order to improve low bull:cow ratios. Initially, the establishment of the Spike/Fork-50 inch regulation in 1987 removed the biological need for the restriction but low bull:cow ratios were observed again by 2010 (9 bull:100 cows in count areas 20,21,and 24 combined). At the March 2011 meeting, the Board of Game adopted new moose regulations (requiring a legal bull to have a 50 inch antler spread or at least 4 brow tines on one side) and we have seen the bull:cow ratio increase in recent years (22 bulls:100 cows in 2012).

Initially, the vehicle restriction was from Sept. 11–20. In 1994, the Board created a window to allow vehicle use for moose hunting from Sept. 15–16 to address the issue of meat spoilage. The current vehicle restriction is from Sept. 11–14 and 17–20 and does not impact using motorized transportation for activities other than moose hunting. Eliminating the LKCUA has been discussed at most past Board meetings. Many residents and local Advisory Committees have supported the restriction because it decreases conflicts between ATV and non-ATV users, while others want to see the restriction removed. The LKCUA does not limit the use of boats or planes for moose hunting nor does it limit the use of motorized vehicles on state or borough maintained highways or graveled portions of Oilwell, Brody, and Tustumena Lake roads.

PROPOSAL 151

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Reinstates the Resurrection Creek Closed Area (RCCA).

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **No Recommendation**

RATIONALE: This proposal addresses an allocation issue. The Board eliminated this closed area in 2011. We do not believe there is a biological reason for the proposed restriction, and instituting the restriction would have a small impact on areas open to

moose hunting. The previous RCCA closed moose hunting in an area roughly 48 square miles around Hope (Figure 1). It was established in 1980 from a proposal submitted from a Hope resident due to local concerns about the “combined effects of wolf predation and hunting on moose”.

There are no biological concerns for moose in and around the RCCA relative to the closure. During the 2012 hunting season, 6 individuals reported hunting in the coding unit that overlaps the RCCA. Two of these individuals were local residents, 4 were nonlocal residents. According to department records, no legal animals were successfully harvested. Residents of Hope have expressed concerns in regards to safety of other user groups and trespass issues since the area was reopened.



Figure 1. Location of proposed Ressorrection Creek Closed Area.

PROPOSAL 152

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Housekeeping proposal to address changes already made by the Board. This will eliminate the regulation reference to drawing hunts for brown bears in Units 7 and 15.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Adopt**

RATIONALE: Staff proposal-see issue statement.

PROPOSAL 153

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Modifies the season dates and bag limit for brown bear in Unit 15A and 15C by opening a registration hunt April 1- May 31 and September 1- November 1, with a bag limit of 1 brown bear every regulatory year in intensive management areas 15A and 15C and 1 brown bear every 4 regulatory years in non-intensive management areas on the Kenai Peninsula.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Amend and Adopt**

RATIONALE: The Board changed the brown bear season in Units 7 and 15 in 2011. At that time, there was a drawing hunt selection in process so the Board made interim changes respecting the drawing hunt that will end spring 2013. The current regulations adopted by the Board are for a registration season (starting in 2013) from September 15- November 30. The proposed regulation would liberalize the season dates to April 1-May 31 and September 1-November 1 and allow a 1 bear per regulatory year bag limit in intensive management units 15A and 15C, and 1 brown bear every four regulatory years in non-intensive management areas on the Kenai Peninsula.

Anecdotal information provided by hunters and land users suggest a higher number of brown bears currently on the landscape than previously estimated. Population indices for Kenai brown bears currently suggest a healthy and stable to increasing population. As such this population should be able to sustain increased harvest levels. Reported non-hunting mortalities increased beginning in the 1990’s and reached 40 by 2008, but have declined in recent years (11 in 2012). Efforts have been and will continue to be made to educate Kenai residents about bear attractants and garbage management. These efforts have helped to reduce bear human conflicts but alone have not been enough to reduce non-hunting mortalities to pre 1990’s levels. To further reduce bear human conflicts, and provide hunting opportunities, it would be beneficial to increase and focus harvest near residential areas.

The brown bear population on the Kenai Peninsula can provide opportunities for a variety of users including hunters who seek easy access, hunters who prefer remote areas, hunters seeking a trophy-sized coastal brown bear, and bear-viewers at seasonal bear concentration areas. In an effort to accommodate these diverse uses and address

bear/human conflicts near communities, the department recommends amending this proposal as follows:

- 1) Modify the existing registration brown bear hunt with season dates April 1 – May 31 and September 15-November 30 in the area south and west of the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge and North of the Bradley Lake/River drainage in Unit 15, and in a defined area around the communities of Seward and Moose Pass in Unit 7 (Figure 1)
- 2) The remainder of Units 7 and 15 will be regulated by a drawing permit hunt with season dates of September 1-November 30 where up to 50 permits can be issued. Curtail the season by Emergency Order when the 3-year moving annual (calendar year) average of 10 adult (5+ years-old) female bears are killed by all anthropogenic causes within the drawing hunt boundaries.
- 3) Insert 3-year running average language in codified under 5AAC 92.008 if harvest objectives are agreed upon.
- 4) Retain the 1 brown bear every 4 regulatory years bag limit for both the Registration and the Drawing Permit areas. This will simplify regulations for both hunters and enforcement personnel. Any liberalization of bag limit can be revisited during the next scheduled Board cycle after we determine the impacts of expanding seasons and elimination of the harvest cap within the Registration hunt.

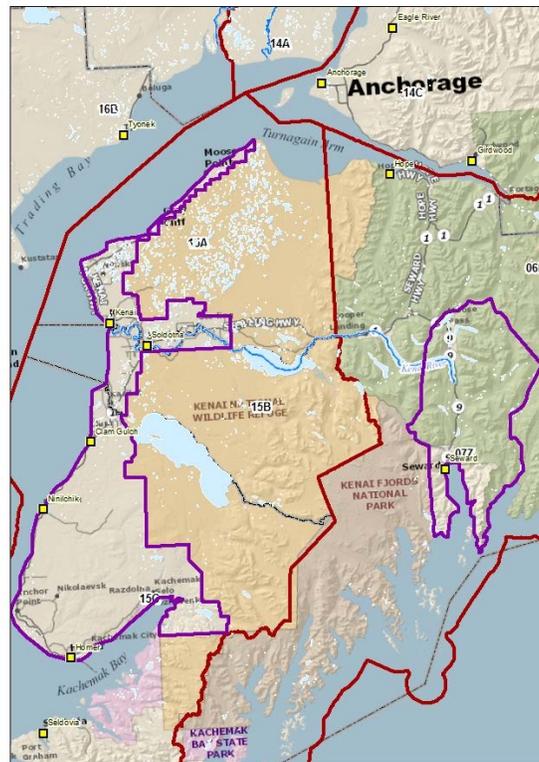


Figure 1. Boundaries of proposed brown bear registration and drawing hunt areas in Units 7 and 15.

PROPOSAL 154

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Allows the harvest of brown bears at black bear bait stations in intensive management Units 15A and 15C.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **No Recommendation**

RATIONALE: The Department views this proposal as an allocation issue between hunters that prefer using bait to other methods. Hunters that prefer other methods of take may lose their opportunity to harvest brown bears given the likely success of hunters using bait. Thus far, all brown bears taken over bait stations in other parts of the state, the Board has required that hunters salvage the meat for human consumption.

PROPOSAL 155

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Allow the harvest of brown bears at black bear bait stations in Units 15A and 15C

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Take No Action**

RATIONALE: See department recommendation and rationale for proposal 154.

PROPOSAL 156

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Modifies the season dates and bag limit for brown bear in Units 7 and 15, and allows the harvest of brown bears at black bear bait stations in these units.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Take No Action**

RATIONALE: See department recommendation and rationale for proposal 154.

PROPOSAL 157

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Modifies black bear salvage requirement in Units 7 and 15, where either the hide and skull or the meat must be salvaged.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **No Recommendation**

RATIONALE: The Board recently changed the salvage requirements for black bears across many units, including Units 7 and 15.

We would continue to emphasize that sealing of bears is important for black bear management on the Kenai Peninsula. Recent increases in the harvest of black bear on the Kenai (Figure 1) suggest we need to maintain sealing requirement in order to monitor harvest for potential signs of overharvest. Currently, the salvage of the hide is only a requirement from Jan. 1- May 31. From June 1-Dec. 31, hunters can salvage the meat and/or the hide (with evidence of sex attached to either).

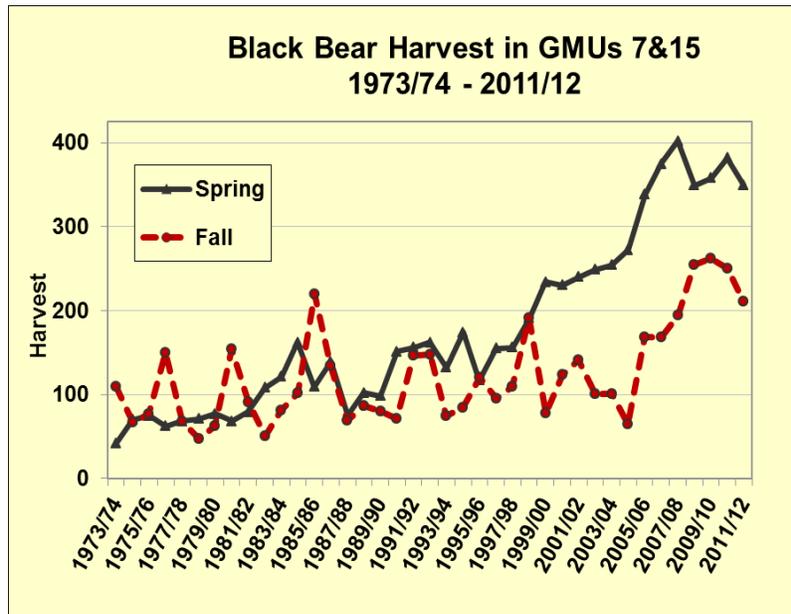


Figure 1. Black bear harvest in Units 7 and 15 (1973/74 – 2011/12).

PROPOSAL 158

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Increases the bag limit for black bears in Units 15A and 15C north of Kachemak Bay to 5 animals per regulatory year.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **No Recommendation**

RATIONALE: The current bag limit for black bears for Units 15A and 15C is 3 bears per regulatory year. Department records for the last 3 hunt years do not indicate that any hunters have taken more than 2 black bears in a regulatory year. Increasing this bag limit is unlikely to increase the take of black bears significantly. Black bear hunting on the Kenai Peninsula is a resource (the most harvested big game animal) for both food and trophy value. For many of our hunters black bears are the first big game species they will ever harvest.

PROPOSAL 159

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would open the Skilak Loop Management area to wolf, coyote, and lynx hunting.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **No Recommendation**

RATIONALE: The department went through a lengthy planning process with the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge regarding changes to hunting opportunities within the Skilak Loop Management Area. Currently, firearm harvest opportunities focus on youth small game hunting and are limited due to the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge management goals as a popular recreational and wildlife viewing area. The Board adopted these recommendations in 2007. Other than lynx, which are managed under a harvest tracking strategy (seasons open when lynx numbers are high and close when they are low) there are no biological concerns associated with this proposal.

PROPOSAL 160

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Modifies season dates for wolf hunting in Units 7 and 15 to no closed season.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **No Recommendation**

RATIONALE: The majority of the wolf harvest in Units 7 and 15 is taken under a trapping license. The trapping season is Nov. 10 - Mar. 31 with no bag limit. In 2011, the Board increased the bag limit for hunting wolves in Units 7 and 15, eliminating the restriction of a 2 wolf limit on Kenai National Wildlife Refuge lands, making the hunting bag limit 5 wolves in Unit 7 and 15. Since wolves are considered a valuable resource to most trappers, we recommend restricting hunting of wolves to times when hides are most valuable. The proposal if adopted will likely have little effect on the overall number of wolves harvested, but may lead to different regulation on Refuge lands, which may lead to hunter confusion.

During November 2011, the department hired pilots to conduct a wolf census in Unit 15. The resulting wolf population estimates were 60 - 62 wolves in 15A, 40 - 46 wolves in 15B, and 44 - 52 wolves in 15C. Wolf harvest during the 2011/12 season included 10 in Unit 15A (16% - 17% of the preseason population estimate), 6 in Unit 15B (13% - 15% of the preseason population estimate), and 21 in Unit 15C (40% - 48% of the preseason population estimate). The department will conduct another wolf census as soon as conditions allow during 2013.

PROPOSAL 161

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal asks to change the season closure date for ptarmigan from March 31 to April 30 in GMU 7 and 15. The proposal also asks to change the bag limit after February 28 from 10 per day / 20 in possession to 5 per day / 10 in possession from March 1 to April 30.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Do Not Adopt**

RATIONALE: Currently there are no population abundance or distribution assessment programs for willow, rock, or white-tailed ptarmigan in GMU 7 or 15. What the Department knows about ptarmigan abundance in GMU 7 and 15 is based on hunter reports and anecdotal information from Department staff while out completing field work on other species.

Based on responses to the 2012 statewide small game hunter survey, GMU 7 and 15 both receive moderate hunting pressure yet typically have relatively high harvest per unit effort. Also, hunters generally report harvesting fewer than 5 ptarmigan per hunting trip. Based on available information including hunter reports, Department staff observations, and the 2012 small game hunter survey willow ptarmigan populations appear abundant or at least stable.

However, the scientific and regulatory community throughout North America, with hunted grouse and ptarmigan populations, have documented that winter, particularly late winter (late February through April) harvest is additive to natural mortality. Adult male rock and willow ptarmigan often overwinter near or adjacent to springtime breeding territories and begin exhibiting territorial breeding behavior by early to mid-March. This very conspicuous behavior increases their exposure to human harvest during the breeding season and further impacts localized and easily accessible ptarmigan populations. The Department has begun to examine the effects of late winter hunting in subunits 13B and 13E. Preliminary data suggests that wintertime hunting may be contributing to reduced population abundance of willow ptarmigan in portions of subunit 13E where hunting has been allowed.

In Alaska, much of the ptarmigan harvest occurs from late-February through March. During this time of year, snow conditions are favorable for operating snow machines and day length and daytime temperature are increasing. Many Alaskans are looking for hunting opportunities during this enjoyable time of year. However, it is also when ptarmigan are most vulnerable to population effects including hunting.

Based on ptarmigan vulnerability at this critical time of year, the Department does not recommend adopting the season extension. The department has no recommendation on decreasing the bag limit as our recent survey revealed generally few hunters harvest more than 5 ptarmigan per hunting trip. However, the Department plans on creating and building a springtime abundance survey program on the Kenai Peninsula to begin monitoring populations of willow, rock, and white-tailed ptarmigan. These techniques

have already been employed in GMU 13, 14, 20, and 25 and will allow a means for comparing springtime breeding densities between statewide survey locations.

PROPOSAL 162

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Open Sheep seasons seven days before nonresident seasons for southcentral units

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **No Recommendation**

RATIONALE: Sheep hunting in Region II is primarily by permit (14C and portions of the Kenai Peninsula). For the 14C hunts seasons are currently set by discretion of the department solely to distribute hunters across time. Allocating times to provide a resident preference is possible under the current strategy but the department would need Board approval/direction given the allocation nature of the proposal.

Permit hunts on the Kenai are not allocated by residency. If the board would like to consider first allocating between residents and nonresidents the following information may be necessary: Hunt DS150 (Round Mountain) has been in place for 9 years. During this period one nonresident hunter received a permit out of 27 total permits issued and was unsuccessful. Four rams were taken by residents. For DS160 (Crescent Lake) two nonresidents received permits out of 64 issued in 10 years and both were unsuccessful. Eleven rams were reported taken during this period.

The remainder of the Kenai (Units 7 and 15) is general season (harvest ticket) hunting. During the past 10 years 126 sheep were taken with 15 (11.9%) by nonresidents. Annual harvest by nonresidents ranged from 0-4 rams per year. Further complicating this issue is that only 7 of the 15 reported using a registered guide indicating that many nonresidents hunt with relatives. Separating resident and nonresidents would also impact some resident hunter opportunity.

While this proposal suggests an additional 7 days be added to the current season other proposals suggest different dates. If the board considers this proposal they will need to select season dates.

PROPOSAL 163

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Open Sheep seasons seven days before nonresident seasons for southcentral units

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Take No Action**

RATIONALE: See department recommendation for proposal 162.

PROPOSAL 164

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Open Sheep seasons five days before nonresident seasons for southcentral units

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Take No Action**

RATIONALE: See department recommendation for proposal 162.

PROPOSAL 165

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Open All Resident hunting seven to ten days before nonresident seasons for southcentral units.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Do Not Adopt**

RATIONALE: This proposal affects all hunting seasons in Region 2 for all species. There are 236 drawing permit hunts, 76 registration permit hunts and a large number of general seasons that would all be affected by this blanket proposal.

PROPOSAL 166

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Open All Big Game seven days before nonresident seasons for southcentral units.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Take No Action**

RATIONALE: See department recommendation for proposal 165.

PROPOSAL 167

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Open seasons ten days before nonresident seasons for all species for Southcentral units. Allocate 90% of harvest to residents, remove guide requirements, increase tag and permit fees.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION:
Take No Action on season changes, guide requirements, and tag and permit fees.
No Recommendation on allocation of harvest .

RATIONALE:

- 1) Season changes have been addressed in previous proposals and for certain species. However this proposal requests that resident preference for an earlier season be applied to all species.

2) Guide requirements mentioned in this proposal are set in statute and the Board does not have the authority to modify or repeal legislation. AS 16.05.407 and AS 16.05.408.

3) Harvest tags and permit fees are also determined by statutory authority approved and passed by the legislature AS 16.05.330 and AS 16.05.340. The Board of Game does not have the authority to set or change tag or permit fees with few exceptions.

4) The Board has previously discussed the percentage allocated to residents and nonresidents. The Board created a guiding policy in 2006 (Policy 2006-162-BOG) and later revised policy (2007-173-BOG) that provides guidance when determining nonresident allocations. This policy recognizes the historical harvest as one of the important factors. The department has no recommendation if the Board decides to revise or repeal this policy and change the allocation to residents.

Permit hunts for Dall sheep in Unit 14C are currently allocated by residency following the above policy. The Board determined that 13% of the rifle permits and 5% of the archery permits would be allocated to nonresidents. The board did not separate between hunters hunting with resident relatives or registered guides.

Permit hunts on the Kenai (Units 7 and 15) are not currently allocated by residency. If the board would like to consider first allocating between residents and nonresidents the following information may be helpful: Hunt DS150 (Round Mountain) has been in place for 9 years. During this period one nonresident hunter received a permit out of 27 total permits issued and was unsuccessful. Four rams were taken by residents. For DS160 (Crescent Lake) two nonresidents received permits out of 64 issued in 10 years and both were unsuccessful. Eleven rams were reported taken during this period.

The remainder of the Kenai is general season (harvest ticket) hunting. During the past 10 years 126 sheep were taken with 15 (11.9%) by nonresidents. Annual harvest by nonresidents ranged from 0-4 rams per year. Further complicating this issue is that only 7 of the 15 reported using a registered guide indicating that many nonresidents hunt with relatives. Separating resident and nonresidents would also impact some resident hunter opportunity.

PROPOSAL 168

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Limit drawing permits to 10 percent for nonresidents in Southcentral units.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **No Recommendation**

RATIONALE: The Board has previously discussed the percentage allocated to residents and nonresidents. The Board created a guiding policy in 2006 (2006-162-BOG) and later revised policy (2007-173-BOG) that provides guidance when determining nonresident allocations. This policy recognizes the historical harvest as one of the important factors. The department has no recommendation if the Board decides to revise or repeal this policy and change the allocation based on residency.

PROPOSAL 169

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Allocate 90 percent of the permits to resident hunters and 100 percent when there are less than 10 permits available.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Take No Action**

RATIONALE: See rational for proposals 167 and 168.

PROPOSAL 170

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Limit drawing permits for sheep hunts to 10 percent for nonresidents in Southcentral units.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Take No Action**

RATIONALE: See rational for proposals 167 and 168.

PROPOSAL 171

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Develop a permit allocation formula for second degree of kindred hunters in Units 14C and 15, in the nonsubsistence area as described at 5 AAC 99.015. Further divide the nonresident allocation between guided and non-guided hunters with at least 75% allocated to guided hunters.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **No recommendation.**

RATIONALE: The Board has previously discussed the percentage allocated to residents and nonresidents. The Board created a guiding policy in 2006 (2006-162-BOG) and later revised policy (2007-173-BOG) that provides guidance when determining nonresident allocations. This policy recognizes the historical harvest as one of the important factors. In the past the Board has attempted to allocate between guided nonresidents and residents hunting with resident relatives (i.e. Kodiak Brown Bear) but has not been consistent (Unit 14C sheep and some mountain goat hunt are divided between residents and nonresidents only and Unit 15 mountain goat with no separation). This proposal does not address which species are included which could further complicate the process. If the Board were to consider as resident/nonresident guided/nonresident relative permit system the department may be challenged with the current permit numbering system.

PROPOSAL 172

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Prohibit the taking of wolves from March through October from trapping, hunting, and intensive management programs.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **No Recommendation**

RATIONALE: All wolf management occurs on a sustained yield basis. This proposal would reduce the current wolf trapping season by one month in units 6, 7 and 15, the wolf hunting season by almost 5 months in Unit 6, 7, 14C, and 15. During the past 5 years 236 wolves were reported taken in Region II units. Eighty three (35%) were reported taken during those months proposed to close. This proposal would substantially reduce the opportunity to take wolves.

If approved this closure could impact board approved wolf control programs in Units 15A and 15C.

PROPOSAL 173

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Prohibit the snaring of bears in Region II units.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **No recommendation**

RATIONALE: In January, 2010 the Board changed the classification of black bears to include them as Furbearers. Trapping and snaring of black or brown bears is currently prohibited on a statewide basis, except in specified Intensive Management areas. This proposal would only impact snaring of bears within those areas, none of which are currently in Region II. The Board has not currently established any trapping seasons for these two species.

PROPOSAL 174

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Prohibit the snaring of bears in Region II units.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Take no action.**

RATIONALE: See Proposal 173for rationale.

PROPOSAL 175

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Modify the coyote hunting season and bag limit to no closed season—no bag limit.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **No recommendation.**

RATIONALE: Similar proposals were considered by the Board of Game at previous meetings and as recently as 2009. The department supports uniform seasons and bag limits wherever they can be applied. Presently there are 3 different seasons and 4 different bag limits across the state for hunting coyotes. None of these seasons are open year round. The department has no position on the increase to “no limit”. We suspect that hunters will rarely if ever exceed the existing bag limit of 10 per day.

In 2009 the Board considered a proposal for a “no closed season” and that part of the proposal failed in part because of hide quality and because of puppies in dens. In 2011 the Board adjusted the hunting seasons in all Region II units to a consistent August 10 - May 25 and removed the bag limit. We assume concerns still exist relative to summer hunting. However even with a “summer” season few hunters are likely to participate.