

**PRELIMINARY  
ANALYSIS  
and  
RECOMMENDATIONS  
for  
BOARD OF GAME PROPOSALS**

**January 2013 - Region I**

*Alaska Department of Fish & Game*

*Division of Wildlife Conservation and Division of  
Subsistence*

*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 1**

**EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL:** This proposal would allow doe deer to be harvested from the Juneau road system in GMU 1C and would increase the bag limit from two bucks to four deer of either sex.

**DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION:** **Do Not Adopt (doe season)**  
**No Recommendation (increase in buck bag limit)**

**RATIONALE:** The intent of this proposal is to provide additional opportunity to harvest deer from the Juneau mainland road system. The department does not have any population data to assess the current status or to track population trends in this area; however, we have always considered the deer density on the mainland to be much lower than the adjacent islands based on deer harvest statistics and anecdotal data. For instance, during the 5 year period of 2005–2010, 26 deer were taken on the mainland per year, or approximately 6% of the Unit 1C annual harvest during that period (459 deer/year).

We do not believe this population could be sustained with a hunt that included the taking of does. The mainland areas that have reasonable numbers of deer coincide with the Juneau road system, making deer in these areas very vulnerable to hunter access and harvest. For islands such as Douglas and Shelter Islands, deer are less vulnerable than on the mainland because of refugia offered by terrain, or the need for hunters to use boats for access. The mainland however has a road system that allows access to within a short distance of nearly all available habitats. Additionally, the amount of forested habitat along the mainland is limited, which concentrates deer in the late season, making them much more vulnerable to hunters than the adjacent islands. Aside from habitat and access differences between the islands and the mainland, there are also differences in predator levels. Wolves, coyotes, and black bears are found on the mainland portion of Unit 1C, but are either absent or at very low densities on the islands. Wolves are known to be a significant predator on deer in other parts of Southeast Alaska, as are black bears on deer fawns. We do not know whether coyotes are a predator of deer in this area, but likely wolves and to some degree black bears do have an impact on deer numbers on the mainland.

Hunters are currently allowed to harvest up to two antlered deer from the Unit 1C mainland during the period August 1–December 31. This season and bag limit has been in place since 1992. Prior to that, the season and bag limit in this part of Unit 1C was 4 deer, August 1–December 31, with antlerless deer only open for harvesting during September 15–December 31. A proposal in 1991 to reduce the bag limit cited lack of population data, apparent low deer densities, predation, and inconsistency with other seasons and bag limits across mainland Southeast Alaska as factors supporting the change to the current regulation. The department believes all these considerations are still relevant. The lower bag limit has proven to be a successful management strategy for a sustainable harvest as well as providing opportunity for a maximum number of hunters.

Given the paucity of population data for mainland deer numbers, the suspected lower density, the limited habitat where deer are found, the department is reluctant to change the bag limit to include female deer as this may ultimately lead to fewer deer through reduced fawn production. The department has no recommendation concerning increasing the buck deer bag limit because this is primarily an allocation among hunters. At present, buck numbers appear adequate for local reproduction. Deer herd composition data for Unit 1C is not available. Additional buck harvest may impact the stability of local deer herds should buck harvests increase to a level where an adequate number of males are not available for reproduction.

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**PROPOSAL 2**

**EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL:** This proposal would allow youth hunters to hunt deer in Unit 5A two weeks prior to the opening of the general season hunt.

**DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION:** **No Recommendation**

**RATIONALE:** This is an allocation issue among hunters and therefore the department has no recommendation on this proposal. However, under AS 16.05.255(i) the Board is required to evaluate youth hunting opportunities within the state.

The current season and bag limit is 1 buck deer, November 1–November 30. Were this proposal to pass, the season would be two weeks longer, running from October 15–November 30. We do not anticipate any conservation concerns with this added hunting opportunity providing it is also limited to bucks only.

This proposal was submitted by the Yakutat Advisory Committee and therefore has community support. While young hunters in many other areas in Southeast Alaska can access deer in multiple places, Yakutat is a unique area in that deer are limited almost entirely to a series of small islands near the village of Yakutat. With such limited opportunity for harvesting deer, this proposed youth hunt would provide a valuable opportunity for young hunters to get involved in deer hunting.

Over the years, the Board has created several youth hunts, and all the current youth hunts require participants to have taken a hunter education course. Generally this is required through a discretionary permit condition. However, since this hunt is managed by general season harvest ticket for deer, rather than a permit, these discretionary conditions don't apply. In Kodiak, the Board extended the restricted weapons season for deer and created a special management area which requires hunter education and additional requirements for a youth hunt. If the Board chooses to adopt this proposal, the department would recommend a similar amendment to create a special management area as that used to manage the Kodiak hunt.

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### **PROPOSAL 3**

**EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL:** This proposal would extend the Berners Bay portion of the Unit 1C spring brown bear hunting season to June 20<sup>th</sup>, and change the bag limit to one bear every year.

**DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION:** **Amend and Adopt**

**RATIONALE:** The author proposes these changes to provide increased bear hunting opportunity by extending the length of the hunting season, and by allowing the harvest of one bear every year. He suggests that these changes might also assist in removing bears that may be preying on moose calves and keeping calf survival low. He indicates that persistent snow and ice conditions in Berners Bay during spring make it difficult to hunt bears in that area during the spring season.

GPS collar location data from a recently completed department brown bear study in Berners Bay indicates that bears use the tidal flats and estuaries in the lower portions of the bay during mid to late May and are available to hunters during the existing season. The historical spring harvest of brown bears in Berners Bay supports these findings, with the peak brown bear harvest during 2002–2011 occurring during the week of May 8–31. Successful hunters during this period only expended 2.2 days to harvest a bear, suggesting that bears are available for those interested in pursuing them.

The brown bear harvest in Berners Bay has been low. The mean annual harvest over the last 10 years has been 1.7 bears. Of the 17 harvested bears, 12 have been males and 5 have been females. In addition to the 17 hunter killed bears, DLPs, illegal harvests, and research mortalities have resulted in an additional 9 dead bears during the past 10 years. Cumulatively over the past decade, 26 brown bears have been killed in Berners Bay for an average of 2.6 per year. Hunter effort, both successful and unsuccessful, has been low, with successful hunters taking an average of 1.8 days to harvest a bear and unsuccessful hunters spending an average of 3.5 days in the field.

Recent research efforts estimate the Berners Bay brown bear population to be approximately 63 bears (mean of 2007 & 2008 estimates that includes all age classes). Based on this estimate, the harvest rate over the last 10 years has been ~3% (2 bears annually). During the same time period the harvest has exceeded two bears per year three times, and during these years the harvest rate ranged between 5%–6%.

Implications on moose survivorship due to the lengthening of the brown bear season and the allowance of one bear every year are unknown. Brown bears are one of three large predator species found in the bay. It is likely that brown bears, black bears, and wolves contribute to the predation of moose adults and calves in the bay. However, without moose calf mortality research, it is not possible to predict what effect a nominal increase in brown bear harvest will have on moose calf survival and recruitment. The Berners Bay moose population continues to increase slowly after a series of severe winters.

Historically, the moose population has demonstrated the ability to rebound in the presence of brown bears and other predators after winter related declines.

Southeast Alaska brown bear seasons take into consideration differing environmental conditions found in various parts of the region (e.g., the islands of Unit 4) versus the mainland (e.g., Unit 1). For instance, a portion of the Unit 4 spring brown bear season ends on May 20, while the Unit 1 season ends May 31, thereby allowing for hunters to access bears that might emerge later from dens due to colder environmental conditions on the mainland.

The department recommends amending this proposal by changing the bag limit to one bear every year while maintaining the current season dates. An increase in harvest is possible and can be managed through emergency order authority if needed. The department will likely use a 3-year average to assess overall mortality (including hunter harvest) and sex ratios. The age structure of harvested bears and skull measurements will continue to be used in long-term population management. As previously described, GPS collar data, successful hunter effort information, and existing season dates that recognize differing climate conditions within Southeast, Alaska support the department's recommendation to maintain the current brown bear hunting season dates in Berners Bay.  
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**PROPOSAL 4**

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would extend the Berners Bay portion of Unit 1C spring brown bear hunting season to June 10<sup>th</sup>, and change the bag limit to one bear every year.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Take No Action**

RATIONALE: See analysis and recommendation for proposal 3.  
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**PROPOSAL 5**

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would change the resident brown bear bag limit in Unit 5 to 1 bear every 2 years, from the present bag limit of 1 bear every 4 years.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **No Recommendation**

RATIONALE: This is primarily an allocation issue between resident and nonresident hunters.

The brown bear bag limit in Unit 5 is 1 bear every 4 regulatory years, the same as every other game management unit in Southeast Alaska. Residents take approximately 7 bears annually in Unit 5, and as the proponent points out, the harvest by residents of Unit 5 would not likely increase much should the bag limit be liberalized as proposed.

However, Unit 5 is known for large brown bears, and resident hunters from elsewhere in the state might take advantage of the more liberal allowance, resulting in increased mortality.

Annually, hunters take about 27 bears in Unit 5. Residents account for 26% of the harvest while nonresidents account for the other 74%. In addition to hunter killed bears, non-hunting mortality can be significant. Defense of life and property (DLP) kills, road kills and illegal harvest has accounted for an additional 5 bears annually, resulting in just over 30 bears being killed each year. We also recently learned of additional bear mortalities through a brown bear research project being conducted in the Yakutat area. Over the four years of the current project in unit 5A, 6 radio tagged bears have died of unknown causes, mostly near the community of Yakutat, and we suspect associated with the landfill or with human altercations. These are mortalities that the department would not have known about if these bears had not been radio-collared, yet this represents a significant mortality factor.

While the present level of harvest seems to be relatively stable at 25–30 bears per year, we have no way of anticipating DLP’s or other mortalities, such as those we discovered are occurring from data collected during our recent research project. With continuing issues with the landfill in Yakutat and improper household refuse handling at residences that eventually leads to bear mortalities; we have some concerns with liberalizing the bag limit at this time. We would like to expand the present research to include a density estimate for bears in Unit 5, which would give us valuable data in estimating population size and mortality rates, both important before considering changes to regulations that could result in higher bear harvests.

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**PROPOSAL 6**

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would decrease the black bear baiting season from 12 weeks to 4 weeks (June 1–30) in Unit 1D.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **No Recommendation**

RATIONALE: The department has the discretionary authority to change the bear baiting season dates, so this proposal does not require board action. However, the department is interested in the board’s thoughts on changing the bear baiting season dates. The department has had discussions on this topic with the Upper Lynn Canal Advisory Committee and they are open to changing the dates on an experimental basis.

This change is being proposed to reduce the brown and black bear season overlap during the spring season and to minimize the number of brown bears being attracted to and taken over black bear bait sites. The proponent indicates that the reduction in the baiting season will still allow hunters to attempt to harvest black bears for 8 weeks without bait and, if unsuccessful, they would still have a 4-week baiting season during June.

During the last 10 years, an average of 32 black bears was harvested annually in Unit 1D,

with approximately 34% of these taken over bait. On average, 19 people obtained a permit for bait sites each year, and a mean of 11 black bears were taken over bait. For the years 2002–2011, the majority of black bears harvested over bait have been taken during the last week of May.

There are no conservation concerns associated with either the existing or proposed baiting dates. Adopting the proposal would alleviate controversy between black bear baiters and hunters pursuing brown bears in the same area. The department has received complaints of bear bait stations being set up near brown bear hunting camps. The impacts of shortening the black bear baiting season from 12 weeks to 4 weeks is unknown; but based on average dates of kill, many black bears are already taken over bait during or close to the proposed time period.

The board has determined that the black bear population in Unit 1D supports customary and traditional subsistence uses. The board has set the amount reasonably necessary for subsistence (ANS) at 10–20 black bears (5 AAC 99.025 (a) (2)). Prior to adopting any changes to regulations in this unit, the board should determine if the changes continue to provide reasonable opportunities for subsistence hunting.

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**PROPOSAL 7**

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would allow incidental take of fisher in Unit 1C.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Amend and Adopt**

RATIONALE: This proposal would create the first fisher trapping season in Alaska. Based on anecdotal information, fishers have been observed in the upper Taku River drainage since the late 1990s. The source population for these fishers may be the British Columbia reaches of the Taku River, though the department lacks quantitative data with which to make any determinations about origins. The first documented observation of a fisher in coastal Alaska occurred in 1994, when a skull was found just inside the Alaska-Canada border on the Taku River. The first fisher harvested in Southeast Alaska was taken on the Juneau road system in RY 1996. From 1996 to 2011, six fishers have been reported harvested in the Juneau area. All known fisher harvests have been incidental to marten and wolverine trapping. Because there is not an open fisher season, any fisher caught incidentally must be surrendered to the state.

Based on population data provided by Canadian biologists, it appears fishers occur in low densities in the Taku River drainage. Based on habitat capability models, biologists estimate there are 15–50 fishers on the Canadian side of the Taku River drainage. A fisher trapping season is open from November 1–February 15 in British Columbia. There is no bag limit and trappers are required to report fisher harvests within 15 days of the close of the season. Harvest records indicate that 13 fishers were harvested on the Canadian side of the border during the period July 1985–June 2008.

The only known fisher harvests in Southeast Alaska have come from the Juneau area. The status of fishers in the Juneau area is unknown, though their infrequent harvest suggests these animals are at very low densities. Of the six fishers harvested, 3 were females, one was a male, and two were of unknown sex. The documentation of both male and female fishers in the Juneau area suggests reproduction may be occurring in the area. During winter 2011, seven camera traps were set in areas north of Juneau to Berners Bay in an attempt to capture images of fishers. In addition to the fisher-specific camera traps, additional cameras were used in conjunction with wolverine research in Berners Bay. No images of fishers were obtained at any of these locations.

A proposal to establish a fisher trapping season has been submitted in the two previous board cycles (2008 & 2010). In each case, the department opposed the proposal because we believed fishers are at low densities and we did not want to risk depleting an expanding population. Since we are mandated to manage wildlife populations at a sustainable level, we did not think it was responsible to support opening a fisher season. Today we face similar concerns, but have realized that: 1) trappers are already catching fishers (that are found dead in the traps) as a non target species, so not having a season is not protecting fishers, and 2) opening a season on these animals would provide us with data to help manage this species. We would be able to get information on fisher distribution from trapper caught animals during sealing, and we would be able to use the carcasses to gather genetic material and look at sex and age classes, and even reproductive status.

The department recommends amending the existing proposal as follows: Establish a fisher trapping season in Units 1–5 with season dates of December 1–February 15 to coincide with marten and wolverine trapping seasons. Establish a bag limit of 1 fisher per trapper per season so trappers are not penalized for incidentally catching fishers, and require salvage and sealing of fisher pelts within 30 days of the close of the season.

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### **PROPOSAL 8**

**EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL:** Reauthorize the antlerless moose season in Unit 1C, Berners Bay.

**DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION:** **Adopt**

**RATIONALE:** Staff proposal, see issue statement.

The Berners Bay antlerless moose hunt has been closed since 2007, and will not be opened until such time as current population estimates achieve RY2006 levels; in 2006, two independent surveys resulted in population estimates of  $116 \pm 25$  and  $131 \pm 36$ , respectively. The Juneau-Douglas Advisory Committee annually votes to support the reauthorization of the antlerless hunt. An aerial survey conducted in November 2011 resulted in a count of 73 moose (22 bulls, 41 cows, and 10 calves). Using sightability estimates based on radio-marked cow moose, we estimate the Berners Bay moose population to be approximately  $108 \pm 23$ . In 2010 the population estimate was  $88 \pm 10$ .



moose. The 2010 and 2011 population estimates statistically overlap; we believe the population remained stable, or increased slightly between 2010 and 2011. Both the 2011 bull:cow (54:100) and calf:cow (24:100) ratios increased slightly from 2010 (40:100 and 22:100).

The department is eager to provide moose hunting opportunity in Berners Bay at a sustainable level. Bull only hunts will be the first opportunity for moose hunters in Berners Bay. A cow hunt will only be used when survey data and population estimates suggest the herd is rapidly expanding and may negatively impact available habitat. In the coming months staff will conduct a composition survey, and be discussing the merits and options for providing a drawing permit moose hunt for bulls in Berners Bay in the upcoming years.

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**PROPOSAL 9**

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Reauthorize the antlerless moose season in Unit 1C, Gustavus.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Adopt**

RATIONALE: Staff proposal, see issue statement.

The Gustavus antlerless moose hunt has been closed since 2009, and will not be opened until the herd increases and it is necessary to limit the number of moose due to habitat constraints. Both the Gustavus portion of the Icy Straits Advisory Committee and the Juneau-Douglas Advisory Committee have supported reauthorizing the antlerless hunt annually. An aerial survey conducted in November 2011 resulted in a count of 136 moose (16 bulls, 94 cows, and 26 calves). Using sightability estimates based on radio-marked cow moose, the department currently estimates the Gustavus moose population at approximately 273±90; the 2010 estimate was 252±55. Based on these data, and statistically similar population estimates, the Gustavus moose population appears to be stable at this time. While there are no plans for an antlerless moose hunt in Gustavus in the foreseeable future, the hunt is a tool department managers would like to retain in the event the herd increases to a level that cannot be supported by the available habitat.

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**PROPOSAL 10**

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Reauthorize the antlerless moose season in Unit 5A, Nunatak Bench.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Adopt**

RATIONALE: Staff proposal, see issue statement.

Registration permits for the Nunatak Bench hunt (RM059) have not been issued since 2005 because of persisting low number of moose observed during aerial surveys of the

area. This hunt will not be reopened until this herd increases to at least 25 animals based on aerial surveys. A February 2012 survey resulted in a count of 12 moose (10 adults and 2 calves). The Yakutat Advisory Committee has annually voted to reauthorize the hunt. This hunt was considered an attractive option for hunters who were unsuccessful in the other Yakutat area moose hunts (RM061 & RM062).

The Nunatak Bench receives substantial snowfall each winter and severely limits the area where moose are able to forage. This limitation necessitates keeping moose on the limited habitat at low levels. Because the hunt occurs during the winter, when bulls have dropped their antlers, it is most practical for it to be an either sex hunt.

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## **PROPOSAL 11**

**EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL:** This proposal recommends 7 separate changes to the structure of black bear hunting in Unit 2:

- 1) Change black bear season from September 1–June 30 to May 1–30.
- 2) Reduce resident bag limit from 2 bears to 1.
- 3) Require \$100 bear baiting registration fee.
- 4) Allow bait station registration by mail.
- 5) Change baiting restriction of ¼ mile from a road to 1/8 mile (660') for hunters age 65 and older.
- 6) Increase non-resident black bear locking tag fee from \$225 to \$275.
- 7) Eliminate non-guided, non-resident draw requirement.

**DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION:** **Do Not Adopt**

**RATIONALE:**

- 1) The board discussed various harvest strategies for Unit 2 black bears at both its 2008 and 2010 meetings, including the idea of eliminating the fall and/or June portion of the season as this proposal suggests. After extensive deliberation and input from staff, public, and professional guides, a proposal was passed by the Board of Game to initiate a draw hunt for non-guided, non-resident hunters to be implemented for all of Southeast Alaska (effective September 1, 2012). This regulatory change was considered the best option for addressing black bear concerns in Southeast Alaska, and we believe it should be given a chance to succeed before making any other changes such as shortening the season.
- 2) Non-residents account for >85% of the Unit 2 black bear harvest. Between RY 2001 and 2010, 3,690 black bears have been harvested in Unit 2. Of these, 547 were taken by Alaska residents. Only 32 bears have been taken under the two-bear limit during this 10 year period. The resident two-bear bag limit is a subsistence preference recognizing that some Alaskans harvest black bears primarily for food.
- 3) The board does not have the authority to change fees.
- 4) Beginning in spring 2009, hunters were required to register bait stations in person at a department office. This was due to numerous enforcement issues, such as site

clean-up, bait sites being too close to roads and structures, illegal use of bait permits by lodge guests, transporters providing bait sites for clients, and failure to return permits at the end of the season. By requiring in-person registration and exact GPS coordinates of bait sites, compliance has increased and enforcement by State Wildlife Troopers has been more efficient.

- 5) Restrictions placed on black bear baiting is a statewide regulation addressing public safety concerns. The rule of not hunting within ¼ mile of a road is in place to avoid concentrated bear hunting near roadways, both for public safety reasons and to reduce bear vulnerability to “road-hunting.” This recommended change has potential public safety and law enforcement ramifications as well by allowing bait stations in areas that have traditionally been closed.
- 6) The board does not have the authority to change fees.
- 7) See rationale for #1. In addition, the draw requirement for non-guided non-residents just recently went into effect. The department would like to be able to evaluate the effects of this strategy before reconsidering it. The proponent also states that buying a locking tag in advance is an imposition. In fact, hunters are not required to purchase a metal locking tag at the time of applying for a permit. Only a hunting license must be purchased, which is a standard requirement to apply for any drawing permit hunt statewide.

The board has determined that the black bear population in Unit 2 supports customary and traditional subsistence uses. The board has set the amount reasonably necessary for subsistence (ANS) at 15–20 black bears (5 AAC 99.025 (a) (2)). Prior to adopting any changes to regulations in this unit, the board should determine if the changes continue to provide reasonable opportunities for subsistence hunting.

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## **PROPOSAL 12**

**EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL:** This proposal would disregard (not count) moose antler points that emerge from the antler “burr” at the base of the antler when evaluating compliance with the RM038 antler restrictions.

**DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION:** **No Recommendation**

**RATIONALE:** The department does not consider this a conservation issue.

The proponent contends that in some instances moose antler points emerging from the burr at the base of the antler are difficult or impossible for a hunter to see in the field and therefore should not be counted when evaluating compliance with the existing RM038 antler regulations. It should be noted, however, that the issue of whether or not to count points or tines emerging from the base of the antler (burr points) is not exclusive to the RM038 hunt area. Any attempt to address burr points within the RM038 hunt area will likely have regional and possibly statewide implications.

Although points emerging from moose antler burrs at the base of the antler often meet the legal definition of a point or tine (“*an antler projection at least 1 inch long and longer*

than it is wide”), such antler projections are often little more than an inch long, can be obscured by scalp hair, and therefore very difficult or nearly impossible to detect until after an animal has been killed and examined on the ground. As a result, under the existing antler criteria, an animal that appears to be a legal fork when viewed from even a short distance away can be deemed an illegal 3-point as a result of a small obscured point originating at the antler burr. It is also possible for antler projections emerging from the base to be large conspicuous points measuring 10 or more inches in length that can influence whether a particular antler configuration is or is not compliant with the existing antler regulations.

The Department of Public Safety and Fish and Game hunt managers agree that some smaller burr points are hard to see, but after discussing the proposed regulatory fix as well as other potential solutions, there was consensus that trying to address this problem by disregarding all burr points, whether small or larger, would simply shift the problem to another subset of antler configurations. For example, on page 33 of the Alaska Hunting Regulations it states that “*Brow tines emerge from the brow palm or near the base of the antler and typically project forward*” (emphasis added). Accordingly, points emerging from the base of the antlers are currently regarded as brow tines and evaluated in conjunction with points emerging directly from the brow palm itself. Therefore, completely disregarding points emerging from the base of the antler could make a set of antlers “illegal” that would otherwise have been deemed “legal” if points emerging from the base of the antler were counted.

Because of the relatively small number of animals disqualified annually as a result of small, hard to see burr points (in RM038, 4 of 742 sets of moose antlers evaluated during the past 9 seasons have had burr points that resulted in illegally harvested moose), the department does not consider this a conservation concern. If points originating from the base of the antler are counted when evaluating compliance with moose antler regulations, some hunters are likely to benefit while others could be hurt by the regulation. This is a case where hunters want points emerging from the burr to count when they need them, but do not want them to count when doing so would result in an illegal antler configuration. Therefore, this is an instance where it will be difficult, if not impossible, to find a solution that works well for all parties. Because of the complexity of outcomes and the infrequency of occurrence of this condition, the department believes it is best to not change this regulation.

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**PROPOSAL 13**

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would close the drawing and registration permit elk hunting seasons on Zarembo Island, and would exclude Zarembo, Bushy, Shrubby, and the Kashevarof islands in GMU 3 from the general season elk hunt (no open season).

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Adopt**

RATIONALE: Staff proposal, see issue statement.

Since the inception of the elk hunt in Unit 3, both Etolin and Zarembo islands have been included within the draw hunt boundaries, and considered capable of sustaining elk harvest. In the mid 2000s, however, the department became concerned with the lack of elk being seen by hunters on Zarembo Island. Precise population estimates for elk on Etolin and Zarembo islands are not available and are difficult to obtain because of difficulty in sightability due to rough terrain, dense vegetation, and elusive elk behavior. Prior to the initiation of GMU 3 elk research in 2008, the department estimated the Zarembo Island elk population at roughly 75–100 elk in 2 distinct herds. This was based on anecdotal information from hunters as well as department survey flights. However, elk radiocollaring efforts initiated in 2008 led department biologists to conclude that the Zarembo Island elk population was likely lower than previously estimated. Few elk were seen during annual capture sessions and little sign was seen along the beaches where elk usually reside during winter. Although only a single cow elk was collared on this island, the GPS locations and sightings during radio tracking efforts convinced department biologists that Zarembo Island supports just a single elk herd numbering approximately 35 animals. As a result, the elk hunting season on Zarembo Island was closed by emergency order in November 2008 and no drawing or registration hunt permits have been issued since.

Due to the extensive logging road system on Zarembo Island, approximately 80% of the overall land area on the island is now accessible within 0.9 miles of a road. Therefore, very little refugia exist for elk. Furthermore, the Zarembo elk herd typically occupies beach fringe habitat during the fall and winter months, making them vulnerable to harvest by hunters using boats. Given the island’s low elk population, high road density, extensive shoreline access, and the limited amount of refugia for elk, the department believes the island’s elk population is vulnerable to overharvest.

Given that the department has not issued any elk permits for Zarembo Island since 2008, and is unlikely to do so in the near future, the department recommends that Zarembo Island be closed to elk hunting, and that the boundaries of the GMU 3 elk drawing permit be redrawn to exclude Zarembo Island until such time that the elk population on the island increases to a level capable of providing a harvestable surplus.

Concern also exists that elk are being illegally harvested on Zarembo Island during the Region I general season elk hunt and falsely reported as having been taken on nearby Bushy or Shrubby islands, which are located outside the drawing permit hunt area but open to elk hunting under the general season. Therefore, to reduce the likelihood of elk being bootlegged from Zarembo Island during the general season elk hunt, the department recommends that Zarembo, Bushy, Shrubby, and the Kashevarof islands in GMU 3 also be closed to the taking of elk (no open season).

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#### **PROPOSAL 14**

**EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL:** This proposal would reduce the resident deer season length on the Lindenberg Peninsula from the current 4 month season (August 1–

November 30) to a 2-week season (October 15–October 31), reduce the bag limit from 2 bucks to 1 buck in this area, and close the nonresident deer season in the area. The department plans to present a Feasibility Analysis for Intensive Management in a portion of Unit 3 that includes the Lindenberg Peninsula.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Adopt**

RATIONALE: Staff proposal, see issue statement.

From 1993 to 2002, the Lindenberg Peninsula on Kupreanof Island in Game Management Unit 3 was managed under a very restrictive 2-week deer season (October 15–31) with a 1-buck bag limit. The restrictive seasons and bag limits were initially implemented in the aftermath of a 15-year closure following the severe population declines associated with harsh winters and high wolf densities during the 1960s and early 1970s. By 2002 deer populations had rebounded sufficiently to allow liberalization of the season and bag limit for the eastern half of Kupreanof (Lindenberg Peninsula). In the wake of increased deer density, the deer season and bag limit on Lindenberg Peninsula were increased in 2003 to match the remainder of GMU 3 [4-month season (Aug 1 to Nov 30) with a 2-buck limit].

The combined effects of habitat loss, 3 consecutive deep snow winters (2006/2007, 2007/2008, and 2008/2009) and predation by wolves and black bears has reduced the deer population on the Lindenberg Peninsula to low levels. As a result of past forest management activities, 4,861 acres of productive old growth forest, including important deer winter range, has been harvested to date on the southern Lindenberg Peninsula, Kupreanof Island. The US Forest Service (USFS) is currently finalizing plans (Tonka Timber Sale) to harvest an additional 2,085 acres of old growth forest from the southern Lindenberg Peninsula. Some of these areas are also important deer habitat. There are currently 73.4 miles of existing road on the southern Lindenberg Peninsula (Tonka Road System), and the proposed timber harvest will be supported by construction of up to 1.7 miles of new USFS road and an additional 7.6 miles of temporary road. The reduction of important forest habitat, along with the increased access from proposed roads, adds additional management concerns to this area that already has low deer numbers. Furthermore, the anticipated presence of logging crews working on the Tonka Road system during the spring, summer, and fall months is expected to put additional pressure on the Lindenberg Peninsula deer population through displacement of deer as well as harvest by those employed in the logging activity. We believe this management action is necessary to prevent overexploitation of deer in this area.

The department is currently developing a Feasibility Assessment for an Intensive Management (IM) Plan for a portion of Unit 3 that includes the Lindenberg Peninsula, which is designed to reduce wolf numbers in an effort to rebuild the areas deer population. The department will present the Feasibility Assessment at the January 2013 meeting in Sitka. In the short term, before an IM plan could be implemented, the department recommends that the deer season and bag limit on the Lindenberg Peninsula be returned to pre-2003 levels to mitigate the effects of low deer numbers in this area.

The board has determined that the deer population in Unit 3 supports customary and traditional subsistence uses. The board has set the amount reasonably necessary for subsistence (ANS) in all of Unit 3 at 150–175 deer (5 AAC 99.025 (a) (5)). Prior to adopting any changes to regulations in this unit, the board should determine if the changes continue to provide reasonable opportunities for subsistence hunting, and are in accordance with the subsistence priority

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**PROPOSAL 15**

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: As originally submitted, this proposal would create a controlled use area (CUA), prohibiting the use of motorized land vehicles by marten trappers on the Tonka road system on the Lindenberg Peninsula, Kupreanof Island in Unit 3. The department has subsequently reconsidered the CUA approach and believes it more appropriate to amend this proposal and implement a method and means prohibition on use of motorized land vehicles by marten trappers on the Tonka road system.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Amend and Adopt**

RATIONALE: Staff proposal, see issue statement.

As a result of past forest management activities, 4,861 acres of old growth forest, including important marten habitats, has been harvested to date on southern Lindenberg Peninsula, Kupreanof Island. The US forest Service (USFS) is currently finalizing plans (Tonka Timber Sale) to harvest an additional 2,085 acres of old growth forest from the southern Lindenberg Peninsula in Game Management Unit 3. Some of these areas are also important marten habitats. There are currently 73.4 miles of existing road on the southern Lindenberg Peninsula and the proposed timber harvest will require construction of up to 1.7 miles of new permanent road and an additional 7.6 miles of temporary road. The additional road construction associated with the planned forest management activities will further increase trapper access and make the area’s marten population increasingly vulnerable to harvest. Due to reduced carrying capacity and increased access, martens could be harvested at unsustainable levels on southern Lindenberg Peninsula.

The department recommends that a vehicle method and means restriction prohibiting the use of motorized land vehicles for marten trapping be implemented for the Tonka road system on the southern Lindenberg Peninsula. The Tonka road system is isolated from other road systems and has only one point of vehicle access, so this regulation would be easily understood by trappers and enforceable by the Department of Public Safety. Marten trapping along the southern Lindenberg Peninsula shoreline would be allowed to continue and would be unaffected by this proposal.

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**PROPOSAL 16**

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would modify the bag limit for goats in Game Management Units 1 and 4 by prohibiting hunters who kill a female goat from participating in a mountain goat hunt in Units 1 and 4 for the next 5 regulatory years.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **No Recommendation**

RATIONALE: The department manages mountain goat hunting by allowing a harvest of 4–6 goat points per 100 goats observed during aerial surveys (male goats=1 point, female goats=2 points). Although this strategy allows hunters to harvest either male or female goats, it protects against the harvest of too many females by weighting their harvest twice that of males, which results in the point quota being reached sooner and the season being closed by emergency order if females are harvested. This strategy has proven successful in sustaining populations across Southeast Alaska for many years. Although the proposed strategy may have merit in some cases where nanny harvest at any level represents a conservation concern, the department believes the present management strategy functions well by providing opportunity for hunters to harvest either sex goats, while remaining sustainable via the strategy of weighting female goats more heavily than males.

The board has determined that the goat population in Units 1A (outside the Ketchikan nonsubsistence area), 1B, 1C (outside the Juneau nonsubsistence area), and 1D all support customary and traditional subsistence uses. The board has set the amounts reasonably necessary for subsistence (ANS) at 5–10 goats (Unit 1A), 5–10 goats (Unit 1B), 25–30 goats (Unit 1C), and 10–15 goats (Unit 1D; 5 AAC 99.025 (a) (7)). Prior to adopting any changes to regulations in Unit 1, the board should determine if the changes continue to provide reasonable opportunities for subsistence hunting.

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**PROPOSAL 17**

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would make it illegal to harvest female grouse during the spring grouse season.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **No Recommendation**

RATIONALE: We have 3 species of grouse in Southeast Alaska, sooty grouse (*Dendragapus fuliginosus*), ruffed grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*), and spruce grouse (*Falcipennis canadensis isleibi*). Sooty grouse (formerly known as blue grouse) are well distributed throughout Southeast Alaska, with Prince of Wales Island and a few surrounding smaller islands as well as Zarembo Island being the only places where they are absent. Ruffed grouse are limited to some of the transboundary river systems between Canada and Alaska, and the spruce grouse is limited to Prince of Wales and a few surrounding smaller islands as well as Zarembo Island. Because of the low density and limited range of ruffed and spruce grouse, very little effort is expended on these species by hunters, especially during the spring of the year. Sooty grouse however, are widely distributed, and hunted almost exclusively during the spring of the year when male birds are hooting, and locating birds is relatively easy by homing in on the male birds.

The author of this proposal intended for it to be specific to sooty grouse.

Hunting pressure on sooty grouse varies from intense near communities (especially along



the road systems) to nonexistent in more remote areas. Generally, though, across their range where communities and road systems are absent, hunting pressure on this species is considered light.

During 2005 and 2006, the department conducted a grouse study by collecting wings from hunter-harvested grouse. The purpose of the study was to gather information on the numbers and sex of the birds harvested. During that period, 90 samples were collected from sooty grouse harvested during the spring season, and most were taken from the Juneau road system, or nearby portions of Douglas or Admiralty Islands.

Data collected during the study resulted in reported harvests of 76 male grouse, 12 females, and 2 of unknown sex. Considering that most of the reported birds were taken in areas near Juneau that face relatively intense pressure when compared to many outer areas, these data suggest that the harvest of female sooty grouse during the spring hunting season is relatively low compared to males, and likely not enough to negatively impact the population.

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**PROPOSAL 18**

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would prohibit the snaring of bears in the Southeast Region (Game Management Units 1–5).

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Take No Action**

RATIONALE: Trapping and snaring of black or brown bears is currently prohibited on a statewide basis. This proposal would prohibit an activity that already is prohibited throughout the state under general trapping seasons, although snaring of bears is allowed in some predator control areas. The Board has not currently established any trapping seasons for these two species.

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**PROPOSAL 19**

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would prohibit the snaring of bears in the Southeast Region (Game Management Units 1–5).

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Take No Action**

RATIONALE: See Proposal 18 for rationale.

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**PROPOSAL 20**

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would prohibit the taking of wolves from March through November in the Southeast Region (Units 1–5).

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Do Not Adopt**

RATIONALE: The department recommends leaving the dates for the wolf hunting and trapping seasons as they are. In most areas the hunting seasons span August 1–April 30, while trapping seasons span November 1–April 30. Exceptions are Unit 1B, 3, and a portion of Unit 1A where the hunting season extends to May 31. In Unit 2, the seasons are much more abbreviated due to a conservative management strategy. There, the hunting and trapping seasons span December 1–March 31. In addition, there is an annual harvest cap of 30% of the estimated wolf population. Research is presently underway in Unit 2 to assess the status of the current population.

Wolf populations are widely distributed throughout most of Units 1, 3, and 5 as evidenced by observations from biologists, pilots, hunters, guides, and other outdoor enthusiasts, as well as sealing records from harvested wolves and reports from trappers in the department’s annual trapper questionnaire. Wolves occur rarely, if at all, in Unit 4. There is no indication that the wolf populations in these areas are being negatively impacted by the present seasons. Shortening the fall season would take away opportunity from early season hunters who might want to harvest a wolf while deer or mountain goat hunting. While in the spring, the April wolf season allows early season bear hunters a chance to harvest a wolf should they encounter one. Given that there are no conservation concerns at this time, the department does not believe a shortening of the wolf season is necessary.

The board has determined that the wolf populations in Units 1A (outside the Ketchikan nonsubsistence area), 1B, 1C (outside the Juneau subsistence area), 1D, 2, 3, and 5 all support customary and traditional subsistence uses, whether taken as big game or as a furbearer (5 AAC 99.025 (a) (11)). In these units, the board has found that the amount reasonably necessary (ANS) for subsistence uses of wolves, whether taken as big game or as a furbearer, is 90% of the harvestable portion (5 AAC 99.025 (a) (13)). Prior to adopting any changes to regulations in Unit 1, the board should determine if the changes continue to provide reasonable opportunities for subsistence hunting.

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**PROPOSAL 21**

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would align the trapping seasons for all furbearers in the Southeast Region by having them all open on November 10.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **No Recommendation**

RATIONALE: At present, the only furbearer seasons that open on November 10 in Units 1–4 are beaver and wolverine. The remainder (coyote, red fox, lynx, marten, mink, weasel, muskrat, and river otter) open on December 1, while wolf opens on November 1. The opening dates of these seasons were established to coincide with fur primeness and changing them to earlier dates might compromise fur quality.

Furbearer seasons in Unit 5 open on November 10 in most cases, but it is believed that furbearers in this unit reach primeness at an earlier date due to the unit’s more northerly

geographic location.

The board has determined that the wolf populations in Units 1A (outside the Ketchikan nonsubsistence area), 1B, 1C (outside the Juneau subsistence area), 1D, 2, 3, and 5 all support customary and traditional subsistence uses, whether taken as big game or as a furbearer (5 AAC 99.025 (a) (11)). In these units, the board has found that the amount reasonably necessary (ANS) for subsistence uses of wolves, whether taken as big game or as a furbearer, is 90% of the harvestable portion (5 AAC 99.025 (a) (13)). Prior to adopting any changes to regulations in Unit 1, the board should determine if the changes continue to provide reasonable opportunities for subsistence trapping.

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**PROPOSAL 22**

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would extend the coyote trapping season in Units 1–5 from Dec. 1–Feb. 15 (Units 1–4) and Nov. 10–Feb. 15 (Unit 5), to a single season of Nov. 1–April 30.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Adopt**

RATIONALE: Staff proposal, see issue statement.

This proposal would extend the coyote trapping season in all of Region I to allow trappers to retain coyote hides throughout the wolf trapping season, which ends on April 30 in Units 1, 3 and 5. Currently, the coyote trapping season closes on February 15 and any coyotes taken in wolf sets after that date must be surrendered to the state.

Anecdotally, the coyote population appears to be increasing in Unit 1C and other portions of northern Southeast Alaska. Over the last few years, coyote sightings have increased to a point where they are relatively common in Unit 1C. The department does not currently require sealing of coyote pelts and therefore does not have any information about numbers of animals harvested or their distribution; however, data from the department’s annual furbearer questionnaire suggests that coyotes are considered common in northern Southeast Alaska by trappers during some years

We recommend adopt on this proposal, with an implementation of a sealing requirement that will allow the department to gather some basic information on the distribution and numbers of coyotes being taken.

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**PROPOSAL 23**

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would open resident hunting seasons seven to ten days before nonresident seasons in Southeast Alaska.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **No Recommendation**

RATIONALE: This is an allocation issue between residents and nonresidents.

AS16.05.255 (d) states that “regulations adopted.... must provide that, consistent with the provisions of AS 16.05.258, the taking of moose, deer, elk, and caribou by residents for personal or family consumption has preference over taking by nonresidents.” This proposal does not identify any particular populations or species, but rather addresses “all hunting seasons.”

The broad scope of this proposal would include not only moose, deer, and elk as listed in AS16.05.255(d), but also all other species of big game found in Southeast Alaska, as well as small game, fur animals, unclassified game, and deleterious exotic wildlife.

The board received similar proposal during the 2012 Statewide and Region III meetings and did not support it as a general change in hunt structure.

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**PROPOSAL 24**

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would open the resident hunting seasons seven days before nonresident seasons in Southeast Alaska.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Take No Action**

RATIONALE: See proposal 23 for rationale.

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**PROPOSAL 25**

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would open the resident hunting seasons ten days before nonresident seasons; allocate 90% harvest to residents, remove guide requirements, and increase fees in Southeast Alaska units.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **No Recommendation**

RATIONALE: This is an allocation issue between residents and nonresidents.

Proposal 23 addresses the issue of opening resident seasons earlier than nonresident seasons. Restricting nonresidents to only 10% of the harvest, or eliminating nonresidents in hunts with only a few drawing permits available would substantially and unnecessarily restrict nonresident big game hunting opportunities in Southeast Alaska. The department manages most big game hunting opportunity in Southeast Alaska by registration permits and some through general season harvest tickets. However, 10 black bear hunts, 4 mountain goat hunts, and 3 elk hunts are managed using drawing permits, and the black bear draw permits are only required for nonresident hunters.

The board does not have authority to remove guide requirements for certain game animals, nor to increase permit or tag fees.

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**PROPOSAL 26**

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would allocate 90% of the drawing permits to residents and eliminate nonresident participation in hunts with ten or less permits for Southeast Alaska units.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Take No Action**

RATIONALE: See proposal 25 for rationale.

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**PROPOSAL 27**

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would limit drawing permits to 10% for nonresidents in Southeast Alaska.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Take No Action**

RATIONALE: See proposal 25 for rationale.

Additionally, the department recently went to a drawing permit requirement for unguided nonresident black bear hunters in Units 1-3. In this case, 100% of the permits are going to nonresident hunters.

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**PROPOSAL 28**

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would allocate a certain percentage of permits to nonresident hunters and eliminate nonresident participation for those hunts with small numbers of permits.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Take No Action**

RATIONALE: See proposal 25 for rationale.

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**PROPOSAL 29**

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would allow hunters to harvest one antlerless deer per season on Pleasant Island in Unit 4.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Do Not Adopt**

RATIONALE: Currently hunters are permitted to harvest 4 deer in this portion of Unit 4, with the doe season beginning on September 15, six weeks after the buck opening on August 1. With a bag limit of 4 deer, hunters can conceivably take 4 does if they choose, by hunting after the doe season opens. The proponents of this proposal suggest that deer are being harvested on Pleasant Island at unsustainable levels.

Pleasant Island is a small island (shoreline perimeter of 18.6 miles and an area of 19.45 square miles) that is approximately 4 miles wide and 7 miles long. It is situated offshore about 1.25 miles south of the Gustavus shoreline in Icy Strait, making it fairly accessible via small skiff from Gustavus. The highest elevation of the island is slightly over 500 feet, with a bulk of the island's topography between sea level and 400 feet elevation. Although the shoreline habitat includes large spruce and hemlock trees, a bulk of the island is brushy shrub habitat mixed with extensive muskegs. During most winters, snow accumulates throughout the brushy areas and muskegs. Only the perimeter of the island, with its large volume forests, provides suitable winter habitat for deer. The paucity of winter habitat is the primary limitation to the island's ability to support high numbers of deer.

The department believes that a larger population of deer is not sustainable and not conducive to maintaining the existing deer habitat quality. Therefore, restricting hunters to a single doe could subject the island to overbrowsing by deer, and ultimately result in greater winter deer mortality.

The department periodically conducts deer pellet surveys on Pleasant Island and has done so since 1991. Pellet counts were most recently completed during 2002, 2005, and 2009. One pellet group/plot equals roughly 32 deer/mi<sup>2</sup>. The 2002 survey resulted in 1.96 pellet groups per plot, the 2005 survey resulted in 1.34 pellet groups/plot, and the 2009 survey resulted in 0.72 pellet groups/plot, a 46% decline from 2005. This decline is likely attributable to 3 consecutive severe winters. A desired range of 18–22 deer per square mile on the island would require a deer population of 350–400. The 2009 pellet group count resulted in an estimated density of 23 deer per square mile, or a population estimate of roughly 450 deer.

The board has determined that the deer population in Unit 4 supports customary and traditional subsistence uses. The board has set the amounts reasonably necessary for subsistence uses (ANS) at 5,200–6,000 deer in Unit 4 (5 AAC 99.025 (a) (5)). The estimated annual harvest of deer on Pleasant Island has been < 50 animals, so this harvest represents very little of Unit 4's overall take. Prior to adopting any changes to regulations in this unit, the board should determine if the proposed change will provide reasonable opportunities for subsistence hunting.

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### **PROPOSAL 30**

**EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL:** This proposal would create a 3-day doe (female deer) season within the Northeast Chichagof Controlled Use Area (NECCUA), for only those hunters residing within this area. The proponent recommends that this "special" season only go into effect at times when the "regular" doe season is closed in the area.

**DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION:** **Do Not Adopt**

**RATIONALE:** This proposal makes a request for special allocation of female deer to certain Alaska residents, and would favor hunters living in the NECCUA over all other

Alaska residents by allowing them to hunt female deer when the department believes it is necessary to close the doe season. Although one aspect of the proposal is purely allocative, there is a conservation component to the overall proposal. The department contends that if the doe season is closed at some future time, it would be for conservation reasons and under state of Alaska hunting regulations, no hunting should be allowed regardless of hunters' place of residence. To do so, could have negative consequences to the deer population.

State and federal managers have worked cooperatively to close their respective doe seasons in this area during most of the past 5 seasons due to dramatic declines in deer numbers caused by severe winter weather. This cooperative effort has helped the deer population recover more rapidly in this area than would otherwise have been possible. In fall 2012, a doe hunt was again open to all hunters, including those living in the NECCUA. People living in this area have the same opportunities as all other Alaskans to compete for female deer in this area when the department believes a doe season is warranted.

The board does not have authority to restrict hunting to local residents only.

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**PROPOSAL 31**

**EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL:** This proposal would penalize those hunters who harvest a female goat (nanny), whereby they would be prohibited from hunting mountain goats in Unit 4 for five regulatory years after they harvested a female mountain goat (nanny) in the unit. The taking of nannies with kids is prohibited.

**DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION:** **No Recommendation**

**RATIONALE:** The department does see high nanny harvest as a long-term conservation concern if the current trend continues, but does not have a recommendation on this proposal given the impact it would have on goat hunting opportunity.

Despite repeated department educational efforts to aid hunters in determining the difference between billies and nannies (mountain goat ID handbooks, quizzes, public forums), a high percent of nannies in the harvest continued in parts of Unit 4 through the 2011 season. This fueled the department's concerns about additional nannies being harvested and the effects of lost productivity on the declines in the Unit's goat population. During the 2012 hunting season, we have seen a marked improvement in hunters taking billies over nannies and it appears that our educational efforts are paying off with hunters making efforts to lower the nanny harvest.

To remain within sustainable harvest limits the department has enacted measures that count female goats 2 times that of males. This has resulted in harvest quotas being reached more quickly and has lead to hunt closures by Emergency Orders. However, despite these actions, harvesting of nannies continued, which not only hinders the

recovery of these goat populations, but also results in reduced hunting opportunities for all hunters because of the reduced season lengths. A review of historical hunt records indicates a small percentage of goat hunters are responsible for repeatedly harvesting nannies. Given this recognition, the department believes that the approach recommended in this regulation may encourage chronic nanny harvesters to select male goats, which would be beneficial for the goat recovery while allowing all goat hunters a continued opportunity to hunt and harvest goats.

A decline in the Unit 4 goat population is believed to have been triggered by a series of cold and deep snow springs that resulted in persistent snowpacks beginning in 2006-2007. Compounding the situation was a historical concentration of hunt effort and harvest in watersheds directly surrounding Sitka, where ease of access is greatest. The department took interim steps to reduce goat harvests in these areas by reducing the overall target quota and weighting the harvest of female goats higher than billies. Unfortunately, the high nanny harvest continued and the department established “either/or” quotas, where a greater number of billies could be harvested relative to nannies. Public meetings were held to provide updates on the status of the Baranof Island goat population, the status of ongoing goat research, and to share implications of harvesting nannies during population declines. The public responded with support for proposals that would directly affect those hunters unwilling to avoid harvesting nannies. Noteworthy is the fact that this regulatory approach also serves to dissuade hunters who mistakenly harvest a nanny to leave it on the mountain rather than risk a citation, as would be the outcome under a no-nanny harvest strategy. The Sitka AC supported the proposal also suggested it might be appropriate to include a “sunset” clause when the population rebounded sufficiently.

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**PROPOSAL 32**

**EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL:** This proposal would modify the existing brown bear registration hunt for nonresidents in GMU 4 by only allowing a hunting season on an every other year basis, with fall seasons being open in (odd years only) and spring seasons begin open in (even years only).

**DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION:** **No Recommendation**

**RATIONALE:** The Unit 4 management of brown bears is guided by the Unit 4 Brown Bear Management Strategy (BBMS), adopted in 2000. The strategy was designed by a broad group of citizens and agency representatives; sponsored by the Board of Game and the Department of Fish and Game - Division of Wildlife Conservation. From 1998-2000, the Brown Bear Management Team (BBMT) discussed a wide variety of issues concerning brown bears in Unit 4 to arrive at consensus on the strategy. The BBMS has framed brown bear management in Unit 4 for over a decade. Brown bear populations in the unit are currently believed to be stable, but upward trends of human-caused mortality are a cause for concern/caution. Hunting harvest, primarily from non-resident hunters (more than 60%), is the largest sustained component of the mortality. Three-year average mortality guidelines (including high percentages of female bear harvest)



established as part of the strategy, have been exceeded on two occasions and led to Emergency Order closures on Admiralty, Baranof, and Chichagof islands during the fall 2011 season.

Within the BBMS, recommended solutions for addressing human-caused mortality that exceeds the recommended guidelines were focused on:

- Mandatory adjustment of number of guided hunters;
- Season adjustments; and
- Institution of drawing permits.

Little progress has been made in the past dozen years to adjust either the hunt numbers or the number of guides as a means to lower the human-caused mortality, as recommended by the BBMS. A list of options considered in the plan include:

- Request that the USFS make immediate adjustments to the number of guides as recommended in the BBMS;
- Limit the number of allowable hunts by Guide Use Area;
- Change the fall brown bear season opening date from September 15 to October 15; and
- Establish a nonresident drawing permit hunt.

Although it would seem appropriate to initiate action to implement a season adjustment, specifically to restrict the harvest of brown bears by nonresident hunters in Unit 4 to every other regulatory year (per this proposal), a careful analysis should be conducted to examine what aspects of the BBMS could help achieve the same goal of lowering nonresident harvest.

The board has determined that the brown bear population in Unit 4 supports customary and traditional subsistence uses. The board has set the amounts reasonably necessary for subsistence (ANS) at 5–10 bears for Unit 4 (5 AAC 99.025 (a) (3)). Prior to adopting any changes to regulations in this unit, the board should determine if the changes continue to provide reasonable opportunities for subsistence hunting.

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### **PROPOSAL 33**

**EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL:** This proposal would open the Unit 4 fall brown bear season on Sept. 8 (instead of September 15) and close it on September 31 (instead of December 31).

**DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION:** **No Recommendation**

**RATIONALE:** Please see Proposal 32 and the discussion of the Unit 4 BBMP, which is also relevant to the requests of this proposal. Key components of BBMP have not been adhered to and this proposal is a quick fix instead of addressing long-term management

issues. It also favors guided non-resident hunters rather than resident hunters in the later part of the fall. Additionally, an earlier season could lead to a larger harvest as more streams will have salmon in them, and thus bears, leading to increased vulnerability and harvest.

The board has determined that the brown bear population in Unit 4 supports customary and traditional subsistence uses. The board has set the amounts reasonably necessary for subsistence (ANS) at 5–10 bears for Unit 4 (5 AAC 99.025 (a) (3)). Prior to adopting any changes to regulations in this unit, the board should determine if the changes continue to provide reasonable opportunities for subsistence hunting.

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**PROPOSAL 34**

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would eliminate hunters’ opportunity to hunt brown bears in Unit 4 for eight regulatory years if they harvest a female brown bear with skull that’s less than 20 inches. Guides would lose one hunt allocation in one of the next two regulatory years after two females are taken with skulls under 20 inches in a single regulatory year.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **No Recommendation**

RATIONALE: This proposal would penalize hunters who harvest female brown bears with skulls < 20 inches. The proponent recommends separating hunters into two groups: 1) those that are guided (generally nonresident hunters), and 2) those that are not guided (only resident hunters or nonresident hunters hunting with a relative within the second degree of kindred may hunt brown bears without a guide). The penalties for shooting a female with a skull < 20 inches are not equitable between these two groups, making this proposal somewhat allocative in nature. Additionally, we don’t believe it is realistic to expect a hunter to differentiate a 20” skull from one slightly larger, which is really the basis of this proposal.

Please see Proposal 32 and the discussion of the Unit 4 BBMP, which is also relevant to the requests of this proposal. Some key components of the BBMP have not been adhered to, resulting in many of the concerns we now face. The department believes we need to embrace the recommendations of the BBMS before making other regulatory changes. We see this proposal as an attempt at a quick fix, when the recommendations of the BBMS are meant to address brown bear management over the long term.

The board has determined that the brown bear population in Unit 4 supports customary and traditional subsistence uses. The board has set the amounts reasonably necessary for subsistence (ANS) at 5–10 bears for Unit 4 (5 AAC 99.025 (a) (3)). Prior to adopting any changes to regulations in this unit, the board should determine if the changes continue to provide reasonable opportunities for subsistence hunting.

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**PROPOSAL 35**

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would modify the Unit 4 brown bear harvest allocation by allocating any increase in harvestable surplus (above 4%) to Alaska resident hunters.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **No Recommendation**

RATIONALE: The department views this proposal as primarily an allocation issue among hunters. We do not see a biological concern as long as the additional harvest above the current 4% cap is not large enough to result in conservation concerns for brown bear populations on these islands.

Please see Proposal 32 and the discussion of the Unit 4 BBMP, which is also relevant to the requests of this proposal. Key components of the Unit 4 Brown Bear Management Strategy (BBMS) have not been adhered to and this proposal does not address commitments made to the BBMS more than a decade ago. Instead of changing the harvest guideline, the department recommends that emphasis be put on meeting and implementing the provisions already developed.

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**PROPOSAL 36**

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would disregard wounding loss of brown bears as a human-caused mortality factor in Unit 4.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Do Not Adopt**

RATIONALE: The Unit 4 Brown Bear Management Strategy (BBMS) makes note of wounding loss as a human-caused mortality factor, although a consensus in how to address wounding loss was not reached by the members of the Brown Bear Management Team. However, at the 2004 Region I Board of Game meeting, a proposal was adopted that counts a wounded bear as part of a hunters' bag limit. This regulation gave the department a mechanism for addressing wounding loss, and was incorporated into the Unit 4 management strategy, whereby wounded bears are counted against the annual quota for human-caused mortality.

As submitted, this proposal states that all wounded bears are being counted as females within the annual harvest summaries. This is an inaccurate representation of the present strategy which involves discussions with hunters as to their certainty of the sex of the bear they wounded, and the degree of injury to the bear. This information is then used to determine whether or not the injury is severe enough to actually count this as a wounded bear and whether to consider it a female bear or not.

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**PROPOSAL 37**

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would extend the otter trapping season in Unit 4, by changing it to November 10–April 30 from the present dates of December 1–

February 15.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **No Recommendation**

RATIONALE: At present, the only furbearer seasons that open on November 10 in Units 1–4 are beaver and wolverine. The remainder (coyote, red fox, lynx, marten, mink, weasel, muskrat, and river otter) open on December 1, while wolf opens on November 1. The opening and closing dates of these seasons were established to coincide with fur primeness, and changing them to earlier dates or extending the season might compromise fur quality. Additionally, by lengthening the spring season, otter harvest could increase substantially. Many trappers take otters with firearms, and with the longer days in the spring and better boating conditions, trappers would have greater access to locating and harvesting otters. This could potentially lead to unsustainable harvests.

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**PROPOSAL 38**

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would extend the marten and mink trapping seasons in Unit 4 by changing them from December 1–February 15 to November 10–March 15.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **No Recommendation**

RATIONALE: At present, the only furbearer seasons that open on November 10 in Units 1–4 are beaver and wolverine. The remainder (coyote, red fox, lynx, marten, mink, weasel, muskrat, and river otter) open on December 1, while wolf opens on November 1. The opening and closing dates of these seasons were established to coincide with fur primeness, and changing them might compromise fur quality. This proposal would also add nearly 7 weeks to the seasons for mink and marten which could lead to unsustainable harvests for marten.

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**PROPOSAL 39**

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would extend the seasons for small furbearers on Chichagof Island in Unit 4 by changing the start date from December 1 to November 1.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **No Recommendation**

RATIONALE: Although the proposal as written broadly focuses on “small furbearers” the proponents issue statement clearly targets marten as the furbearer he wants to address. The purpose of the proposal is to lengthen the marten season to increase marten harvest, which he contends would allow the grouse and ptarmigan populations to recover.

The department does have diet information from marten on Chichagof Island obtained during a research study. Birds were a significant prey item during the summer, but the level of grouse and ptarmigan being foraged upon was not known. Whether marten on

Chichagof are responsible for low levels of ptarmigan and grouse is unknown. However, in adjacent areas such as Admiralty Island and portions of the Unit 1C mainland, grouse are relatively abundant in areas where marten are also common.

At present, the only furbearer seasons that open on November 10 in Units 1–4 are beaver and wolverine. The remainder (coyote, red fox, lynx, marten, mink, weasel, muskrat, and river otter) open on December 1, while wolf opens on November 1. The opening dates of these seasons were established to coincide with fur primeness, and changing them to earlier dates might compromise fur quality. The addition of a month to the season for marten might lead to unsustainable harvests in those areas with road access.

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**PROPOSAL 40**

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Reauthorize the antlerless moose seasons in Unit 18.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Adopt**

RATIONALE: Staff proposal; see issue statement

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**PROPOSAL 41**

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Reauthorize the antlerless moose seasons in Unit 22(C) and the remainder of Unit 22(D).

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Adopt**

RATIONALE: Staff proposal; see issue statement

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**PROPOSAL 42**

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Reauthorize the antlerless moose seasons in Unit 23.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Adopt**

RATIONALE: Staff proposal; see issue statement

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**PROPOSAL 43**

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Reauthorize the antlerless moose season in Unit 26(A):

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Adopt**

RATIONALE: Staff proposal; see issue statement

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**PROPOSAL 44**

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Reauthorize the current resident tag fee exemptions for brown bear in Units 18, 22, 23 and 26A.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Adopt**

RATIONALE: Staff proposal; see issue statement

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