

Arctic/Western Region – Reauthorization Proposals

PROPOSAL 39 - 5 AAC 85.045(a)(16). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.
 Reauthorize the antlerless moose season in the Remainder of Unit 18 as follows:

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
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(16)

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Remainder of Unit 18

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

2 moose; of which only 1 may be an antlered bull; a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf; or	Aug. 1 - Sept. 30
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2 antlerless moose; or	Oct. 1 – Nov. 30.
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2 moose	Dec. 1 – Mar. 15
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NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 antlered bull	Sept. 1 – Sept. 30
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What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? To be retained, the antlerless moose seasons in the Remainder of Unit 18 must be reauthorized annually. The current antlerless hunts were adopted at the January 2014 Board of Game meeting in Kotzebue, effective in RY2014.

Implementation of antlerless hunts began in 2007 and has continued each year due to increased moose abundance, productivity, and population growth along the Yukon River drainage in Unit

18. Based on the steady g trend of growth in moose populations and productivity, ADF&G proposes continued antlerless moose hunts in the Remainder of Unit 18.

Within the hunt areas near the Yukon River, the moose population is estimated at a minimum of 12,000 animals with calf:cow ratios ranging from 37:100 to 69:100, and twinning rates close to 50% for all areas. Population growth has been very strong in this colonizing and expanding population and anecdotal evidence suggests that calf survival rates remain high. The population is expected to continue to grow as animals move into under-utilized habitat.

Although the current year harvest data in the Remainder of Unit 18 has not been finalized due to the early proposal deadline, we expect harvest to be similar to the past 3 years and well within sustained yield for this robust population. Allowing antlerless harvest will benefit hunters through increased opportunity, and any increases in harvest may help slow the growth rate of the population in this portion of Unit 18.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (EG-C14-344)

PROPOSAL 40 - 5 AAC 85.045(a)(20). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.
 Reauthorize the antlerless moose seasons in Unit 22C and the remainder of Unit 22D, as follows:

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
(20)		
Unit 22(C)		
RESIDENT HUNTERS:		
1 bull by registration permit only, or	Sept. 1-Sept. 14	
1 antlerless moose by registration permit only; or	Sept. 15-Sept. 30	
1 antlered bull by registration permit only; during the period Jan. 1 – Jan. 31, a season may be announced by emergency order	Jan. 1 – Jan. 31 (to be announced)	
NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:		
1 bull with 50-inch antlers or antlers with 4 or more brow		Sept. 1-Sept. 14

tines on one side by registration permit only

...

Remainder of Unit 22(D)

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 moose; however, antlerless moose may be taken only from Dec. 1—Dec. 31; a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf; only antlered moose may be taken from Jan. 1—Jan. 31	Aug. 10 - Sept. 14 Oct. 1 - Jan. 31
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NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 bull with 50-inch antlers or antlers with 4 or more brow tines on one side, by registration permit only.	Sept. 1 - Sept. 14
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What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? To be retained, antlerless moose seasons must be reauthorized annually. Two areas in Unit 22 require reauthorization: Unit 22C, and the Remainder of Unit 22D.

In October 1999, the board authorized a registration hunt for antlerless moose in Unit 22C and ADF&G has managed this hunt with a quota of up to 33 permits annually. During the period from Regulatory Year (RY) 2001 through RY2012, the Unit 22C population was above its management objective of 450-525 moose and believed to be at or near winter range carrying capacity with populations of 620 and 660 moose, respectively in RY2007 and RY2011. Lowering the population through additional bull harvest was ill-advised due to low bull:cow ratios, ranging from 10-20 bulls:100 cows. Instead, issuing antlerless permits was used to yield harvests of 8-24 antlerless moose per year over the period since RY2001 to achieve population reduction and stabilization. This approach successfully reduced the population to the current estimate of 429 moose in February 2013. Although ADF&G has the latitude of issuing antlerless permits, no permits are planned to be issued in RY2014 because the population has been lowered to management guidelines. We will consider antlerless hunts when factors suggest the population is increasing above carrying capacity. Retaining the antlerless authorization gives flexibility to ADF&G in future hunt management.

In most other parts of Unit 22, low recruitment rates are believed to be causing low moose populations and declines. However, in the Remainder of Unit 22D we recommend continued authorization of antlerless moose hunting where moose populations are increasing and hunting

pressure is low. This portion of Unit 22D is relatively remote with difficult access and these factors contribute to limited hunting pressure in the area.

In the Remainder of Unit 22D, the moose population has grown 1% annually during the period 1997-2011 and the estimated number of moose has increased from 578 in 1997 to 700 in 2011. This area typically shows higher calf:cow and calf:adult ratios than other parts of Unit 22, annually ranging from 14-35ca:100ad with an average of 23ca:100ad since 1988. The reported cow harvest in this area has been low, averaging 1 cow moose per year since 2000. Village harvest survey data (collected only in 2000-2001) shows 5 cow moose were harvested from Unit 22D Remainder, which is a more realistic estimate of annual cow harvest compared to harvest ticket reports. Low harvest rates of antlerless moose support our recommendation to reauthorize antlerless moose seasons in the Remainder of Unit 22D.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (EG-C14-346)

PROPOSAL 41 - 5 AAC 85.045(a)(21). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.
Placeholder proposal for reauthorizing antlerless moose seasons in Unit 23.

At this time, analysis of March/April 2014 population surveys in Unit 23 has not been completed. If recommended, an amended proposal will be provided with department analysis and recommendations.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? To be retained, antlerless moose seasons must be reauthorized annually. This proposal serves as a placeholder for antlerless hunts in Unit 23 and will be amended through the analysis and recommendations submitted by ADF&G prior to the public comment period. As described below, recent population data needs to be analyzed to determine the potential impact on antlerless moose hunts in Unit 23, and whether that opportunity should be retained.

In general, moose density has been low in large portions of Unit 23 for an extended period and this situation prompted the development and use of registration hunt RM880 for resident hunters, beginning in Regulatory Year (RY) 2004. The resident registration hunt was implemented as a way to retain antlerless opportunity through substantially shortened seasons limiting antlerless harvest to the months of November and December. The seasons and bag limits in Unit 23 have not changed since RY2004 and the reported harvest of antlerless moose has been low throughout this period.

Analysis of moose abundance surveys on the Kobuk River has not been possible due to conclusion of the surveys in April 2014. When population assessments are completed this proposal will be updated with antlerless season recommendations.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (EG-C14-347)

PROPOSAL 42 - 5 AAC 85.045(a)(24). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.
 Reauthorize the antlerless moose season in western portion of Unit 26A as follows:

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
(24)		
...		
Unit 26(A), that portion west of 156° 00' W. longitude and excluding the Colville River drainage.	July 1 – Sept. 14	No open season.
1 moose; a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf		

...

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? To be retained, the antlerless moose season in the portion of Unit 26A west of 156° 00' W longitude and excluding the Colville drainage must be reauthorized annually. All other portions of Unit 26A with previous antlerless seasons are not recommended for reauthorization because a population survey in April 2014 shows numbers have been reduced approximately 50% since the last count in 2011.

The western portion of Unit 26A north of the Colville drainage is somewhat unique in relation to the presence of moose and the unit-wide population. The distribution in this area is very sparse due to minimal habitat in the coastal plain to attract moose. However, each year a small number of bulls and cows without calves arrive in this area as they disperse away from the major river drainages in the central and southern parts of the unit. So far, the marginal habitat in this portion of Unit 26A has not allowed moose to colonize or become established in this area. The only moose found in this area appear to have originated from distant locations as they exhibit seasonal movements. The low numbers of moose that disperse to this hunt area provide the only opportunities for harvest in the northwestern portion of Unit 26A.

Even though the Unit 26A moose population is currently low and has experienced a substantial decline since 2011, the number of dispersing cow moose that could be harvested under the proposed antlerless reauthorization is very small and will have very little impact on the size and status of the Unit 26A population. To date, after several years of hunting opportunity in this area, two antlerless moose have been harvested: one cow in 2006, and one in 2008. Due to low harvest rates, we recommend reauthorization of the antlerless moose season in this area.

PROPOSAL 43 - 5 AAC 92.015. Brown bear tag fee exemptions. Reauthorize the current resident tag fee exemptions for brown bear in Units 18, 22, 23 and 26A.

(a) A resident tag is not required for taking a brown bear in the following units:

- ...
- (4) Units... 26;
- ...
- (8) Unit 22;
- (9) Unit 23;
- ...
- (13) Unit 18;
- ...

(b) In addition to the units as specified in (a) of this section, if a hunter obtains a subsistence registration permit before hunting, that hunter is not required to obtain a resident tag to take a brown bear in the following units:

- ...
- (4) Unit 18;
- ...
- (7) Unit 22;
- (8) Unit 23;
- ...
- (10) Unit 26(A).

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The board must reauthorize brown bear tag fee exemptions annually or the fee automatically becomes reinstated. We recommend continuing resident tag fee exemptions for the general season and subsistence season hunts in Region V (Units 18, 22, 23, and 26A).

General Season Hunts: Reauthorizations are needed for: Unit 18, where the tag fee has been exempted for 3 years; Unit 22, where the tag fee has been exempted for 13 years; Unit 23, where the tag fee has been exempted for 8 years; and Unit 26A, where the tag fee has been exempted for 3 years. Tag fee exemptions are desired to allow: 1) incremental increase in annual harvest, 2) opportunistic harvest by resident hunters, and 3) harvest by a wide range of users. Increased harvest is allowable because portions of these units have high bear populations.

General season brown bear harvest rates are within sustained yield limits and previous exemptions of the resident tag fee have not caused dramatic or unexpected increases in overall harvest. In Units 18 and 26A, tag exemptions were authorized for RY2012 and harvest has remained within sustained yield and continues to be similar to the preceding 10-year period. In Unit 22, the 13-year tag-free period for residents has had an average annual harvest of 50 brown bears (range 41-63 bears). In Unit 23, general harvests have been increasing slowly since 1961 primarily in response to increases in human population rather than regulatory changes, although

harvests are annually quite variable due to effects of weather on hunting conditions. Harvest data for Unit 23 show no trend in the sex ratio, age or size of bears harvested under all types of hunts.

Subsistence Season Hunts: Reauthorizations are needed for Units 18, 22, 23, and 26A where brown bear subsistence hunt requirements include: 1) registration permit, 2) tag fee exemption, 3) salvaging meat for human consumption, 4) no use of aircraft in Units 22, 23 and 26A, 5) no sealing requirement unless hide and skull are removed from subsistence hunt area, and 6) if sealing is required, the skin of the head and front claws must be removed and retained by ADF&G at the time of sealing. Continuing the tag fee exemption helps facilitate participation in the associated brown bear harvest programs maintained by ADF&G for subsistence hunts.

In all units, subsistence brown bear harvest rates are low and well within sustained yield limits and exempting the resident tag fee has not caused an increase in subsistence harvest. In Unit 18, we estimate 1-3 bears are taken annually in subsistence hunts. In Unit 22, subsistence harvest by permit is quite low, averaging less than 1 bear per year (less than 1 % of the total brown bear harvest). In Unit 23, subsistence permit harvest is less than five bears annually since 1992 (less than 10 % of the total brown bear harvest). In Unit 26A, between 1 and 5 bears are taken annually by subsistence hunters.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (EG-C14-350)
