

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

STAFF COMMENTS

SOUTHEAST REGION I PROPOSALS

ALASKA BOARD OF GAME MEETING

JUNEAU, ALASKA

JANUARY 9-13, 2015



The following staff comments were prepared by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game for use at the Alaska Board of Game meeting, March 14 – 18, 2014 in Anchorage, Alaska, and are prepared to assist the public and board. The stated staff comments should be considered preliminary and subject to change, if or when new information becomes available. Final department positions will be formulated after review of written and oral testimony presented to the board.

PROPOSAL 1 – 5 AAC 85.020. Hunting seasons and bag limits for brown bear.

PROPOSED BY: Petersburg Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO?

The proposal would establish a resident-only fall brown bear hunting season (Sept. 15 – Dec. 31) in Unit 3 with a bag limit of 1 bear every 4 regulatory years by registration permit only. Permits are proposed to be available in Douglas, Ketchikan, Petersburg, Sitka, Wrangell, online, or by mail from Petersburg.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

Unit 3

1 bear every 4 regulatory years by registration permit only.

Resident open season: Mar. 15 – May 31

Nonresident Open Season: No open season.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal would add a fall brown bear season in Unit 3. The addition of the fall season may result in additional brown bear harvest in the Unit.

BACKGROUND:

In 2004, the Board of Game adopted a proposal submitted by the Wrangell Fish and Game Advisory committee to establish a resident-only brown bear season within the islands of Unit 3. While the original proposal specified dates for a spring brown bear season, it failed to include dates for a fall season. The Board adopted the proposal as written, resulting in a spring brown bear season, but no fall season for brown bears in the Unit 3 islands. Unit 3 brown bears occur exclusively on islands separated from the mainland by relatively short water crossings. The department lacks current population status information for Unit 3 and nearby Unit 1B mainland brown bears. Anecdotal information and staff observations indicate that small numbers of brown bears occur on Mitkof, Wrangell, Etolin, and Deer islands. We remain uncertain of the ability of these islands to support additional harvest of brown bears. Population-level movement patterns among these bears are not known. We suspect that some population interchange does occur between bears in Unit 3 and those on the nearby Unit 1B mainland.

Although the number of brown bear in Unit 3 remains unknown, we believe the population is relatively low. Harvest records show that 7 brown bear (5 males; 2 females) were killed in Unit 3 in defense of life and property between 1979 and 2013. During the 9 years (2006 -2014) the spring-only season has been in effect, just 4 brown bears have been harvested by hunters in Unit 3. These include 1 bear each in 2006 and 2007, and 2 bears in 2008. No bears were harvested in Unit 3 by brown bear hunters from 2009 to 2014. In addition to the 4 bears harvested since implementing the RB075 spring season, in October 2012 one brown bear (boar) was shot

illegally on Mitkof Island by a hunter who mistook it for a black bear, and in August 2013 one brown bear (a sow) was taken in defense of life and property in Wrangell.

In addition to uncertainties about what level of harvest is sustainable, another issue of concern to the department is the high percentage of female brown bears (75%) taken in Unit 3 by hunters during the existing spring brown bear season. The 1 bear taken on Wrangell Island in defense of life and property was also a female.

Resident hunters have taken an average of just 1.3 bears annually on the adjacent Unit 1B Mainland where both spring and fall seasons exist for brown bear. However, given that the dates for the proposed Unit 3 fall brown bear season (Sept. 15 – Dec. 31) coincide with hunting seasons for several other big game species, including black bear, deer, elk, moose, and wolves, establishing a fall season for brown bears in Unit 3 will likely result in increased incidental take of brown bears by hunters targeting other species. Adding a fall season is also likely to further contribute to the disproportionate harvest of female bears in the Unit.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS:

Oppose. The take of additional brown bears from Unit 3 islands is not advisable at this time.

COST ANALYSIS: There may be a minor cost to the department for the administration of a registration permit hunt and the sealing of harvested bears.

PROPOSAL 2 – 5 AAC 85.020. Hunting seasons and bag limits for brown bear.

PROPOSED BY: Petersburg Fish and Game Advisory Committee

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO?

The proposal would establish a resident-only, fall brown bear hunting season (Sept. 15 – Dec. 31) in Unit 3 (Mitkof Island) with a bag limit of 1 bear every 4 regulatory years by registration permit only.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

Unit 3

1 bear every 4 regulatory years by registration permit only.

Resident open season: Mar. 15 – May 31

Nonresident Open Season: No open season.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED?

The proposal would establish a resident-only, fall brown bear hunting season (Sept. 15 – Dec. 31) in Unit 3 (Mitkof Island) with a bag limit of 1 bear every 4 regulatory years by registration permit only.

BACKGROUND:

In 2004, the Board of Game adopted a proposal submitted by the Wrangell Fish and Game Advisory committee to establish a resident-only brown bear season within the islands of Unit 3. While the original proposal specified dates for a spring brown bear season, it failed to include dates for a fall brown bear season. The Board adopted the proposal as written, resulting in a spring brown bear season, but no fall season for brown bears in the Unit 3 islands. The current proposal would establish a resident-only, fall brown bear hunting season (Sept. 15 – Dec. 31) on Mitkof Island in Unit 3.

Unit 3 brown bears occur exclusively on those islands separated from the mainland by relatively short water crossings. The department lacks current brown bear population status information for Mitkof Island. We also lack population information for the rest of Unit 3 and for nearby Unit 1B mainland brown bears. Anecdotal information and staff observations indicate that only a small number of brown bears occur on Mitkof Island. We are uncertain of the ability of these brown bears to support additional harvest. While we suspect that some population interchange does occur between bears on Mitkof Island and those on the nearby Unit 1B mainland, the population-level movement patterns among these bears are not known.

During the 9 years (2006-2014) the RB075 spring-only brown bear season has been in effect in Unit 3, no brown bears have been legally harvested on Mitkof Island. However, in October 2012, one brown bear was killed illegally on Mitkof by a hunter who mistook the animal for a black bear. The only other documented brown bear kill on the island occurred in 1998 when a brown bear was taken in defense of life and property by a moose hunter who was charged by a bear guarding its food cache.

Given that the dates for the proposed fall brown bear season for Mitkof Island (Sept. 15 – Dec. 31) coincide with hunting seasons for several other big game species, including black bear, deer, moose and wolves, establishing a fall season for brown bears is likely to result in some incidental take of brown bears by hunters targeting other species. Given the suspected low numbers of bears on Mitkof Island, it is doubtful the island can support a sustainable harvest of brown bears.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS:

Oppose. The take of additional brown bears from Mitkof Island is not warranted at this time.

COST ANALYSIS: There may be a minor cost to the department for the administration of a registration permit hunt and the sealing of harvested bears.

PROPOSAL 3 – 5 AAC 85.020. Hunting seasons and bag limits for brown bear.

PROPOSED BY: Wrangell Fish and Game Advisory Committee

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO?

The proposal would establish a resident-only fall brown bear hunting season (Sept. 15 – Dec. 31) in Unit 3 with a bag limit of 1 bear every 4 regulatory years by registration permit only.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

Unit 3

1 bear every 4 regulatory years by registration permit only.

Resident open season: Mar. 15 – May 31

Nonresident Open Season: No open season.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED?

The proposal would establish a resident-only fall brown bear hunting season (Sept. 15 – Dec. 31) in Unit 3

BACKGROUND: See background and department comments for Proposal 1.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: See background and department comments for Proposal 1.

COST ANALYSIS: There may be a minor cost to the department for the administration of a registration permit hunt and the sealing of harvested bears.

PROPOSAL 4 – 5 AAC 92.510(5)(B). Areas closed to hunting, and 92.530(24)(A).

Management Areas. Clarify the boundaries of the Petersburg Closed Area and the Petersburg Management Area.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO?

The proposal would redefine the boundaries of the Petersburg Closed Area and the Petersburg Management Area to accommodate the Borough of Petersburg’s recent transition from city limits to expanded borough boundaries. The proposal would not change the actual physical boundaries of the management area.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

5 AAC 92.510. Areas closed to hunting.

(5) Unit 3:

...

(B) in the Petersburg vicinity, a strip one-fourth mile wide on each side of the Mitkof Highway from the Petersburg city limits to Crystal Lake campground is closed to the taking of big game, except wolves;

5 AAC 92.530. Management Areas.

(24) the Petersburg Management Area:

(A) the areas consists of that portion of Unit 3 on Mitkof Island north and west of a line from Frederick Point to the highest point in Section 8, T59S, R90E, to the highest point in Section 7, T59S, R80E, to the highest point in Section 13, T59S, R79E, to the highest point in Section 23, T59S, R79E, then due south to the Petersburg city boundary; and at least one-quarter mile from any airport property, dwellings, businesses, highways, roads or streets within the corporate city limits;

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If adopted this proposal would adjust the closed area boundary to mirror the municipal boundaries as they stood prior to the City of Petersburg’s recent change.

BACKGROUND: Staff proposal, see issue statement.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS:

Support. The Petersburg Borough’s recent transition from city limits to expanded borough boundaries has resulted in the need to revise the boundary descriptions for both the Petersburg Closed Area and the Petersburg Management Area.

Petersburg Closed Area: The existing regulations reference “Petersburg city limits” as the northern boundary of the Petersburg Closed Area. The previous Petersburg city limits intersected Mitkof Highway at approximately 8.75 mile. The department recommends deleting reference to the Petersburg city limits, and replacing it with a mile marker as follows:

5 AAC 92.510. Areas closed to hunting.

(a)(5) Unit 3:

(B) in the Petersburg vicinity, a strip one-fourth mile wide on each side of the Mitkof Highway from **mile 8.75 of Mitkof Highway** [THE PETERSBURG CITY LIMITS] to Crystal Lake campground is closed to the taking of big game, except wolves;

5 AAC 92.510. Management Areas.

(24) the Petersburg Management Area:

(A) the areas consists of that portion of Unit 3 on Mitkof Island north and west of a line from Frederick Point to the highest point in Section 8, T59S, R90E, to the highest point in Section 7, T59S, R80E, to the highest point in Section 13, T59S, R79E, to the highest point in Section 23, T59S, R79E, then due south to **the southern boundary of Section 35, T59S, R79E** [or] **56° 42’ 24” N latitude** [THE PETERSBURG CITY BOUNDARY]; and at least one-quarter mile from any airport property, dwellings, businesses, highways, roads or streets within **Petersburg Borough’s Service Area 1** [THE CORPORATE CITY LIMITS];

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 5 – 5 AAC 92.510(5)(A). Areas closed to hunting.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO?

The proposal would redefine the boundaries of the Wrangell Road System Closed Area to accommodate the Borough of Wrangell’s recent transition from city limits to expanded borough boundaries.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

5 AAC 92.510. Areas closed to hunting.

(5) Unit 3:

...

- (A) a strip one-fourth mile wide on each side of the Stikine (Zimovia) Highway from the Wrangell city limits to the Tongass national Forest Boundary is closed to the taking of big game;

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If adopted this proposal would adjust the closed area boundary to mirror the municipal boundaries as they stood prior to the Wrangell Borough's recent change.

BACKGROUND: Staff proposal, see issue statement.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: Support. The City and Borough of Wrangell's recent transition from city limits to expanded borough boundaries has resulted in the need to revise the boundary descriptions for the Wrangell Road System Closed Area. The existing regulation refers to the Wrangell city limits as the northern boundary of the Wrangell Road System Closed Area. The previous city limits intersected the Zimovia Highway at approximately 12.1 mile. The department recommends deleting reference to Wrangell city limits in the boundary description, and replacing it with "mile marker 12.0" as provided below. Although this will result in a slight enlargement of the closed area (0.1 mile) it will not result any additional loss of hunting opportunity due to overlap with an existing Borough ordinance prohibiting weapons discharge in the enlarged portion of the closed area. Moving the boundary to an existing mile marker post will provide hunters with a visual reference for the start of the closed area.

5 AAC 92.510. Areas closed to hunting.

(5) Unit 3:

- (A) a strip one-fourth mile wide on each side of the Stikine (Zimovia) Highway from **mile marker 12.0 of Stikine (Zimovia) Highway** [THE WRANGELL CITY LIMITS] to the Tongass National Forest Boundary is closed to the taking of big game;

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 6 – 5 AAC 92.150(c). Evidence of sex and identity. Redefine "broken antler" for Units 1 and 3.

PROPOSED BY: Wrangell Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO?

The proposal would require the department and Alaska Wildlife Troopers (AWT) to differentiate between moose antlers that have been recently damaged and/or broken, and antlers with older damage and/or breaks when evaluating compliance with the spike-fork provision in the RM038 moose antler restrictions.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

5 AAC 92.150

(c) ... In Unit 1(B), that portion of Unit 1(C) south of Port Hobart, including all Port Houghton drainages, and Unit 3, a damaged, broken, or altered antler is not considered a spike-fork antler as defined in 5 AAC 92.990.

The current “damaged, broken, or altered” antler regulation applies to the entire RM038 hunt area which includes Unit 1(B); that portion of Unit 1(C) south of Port Hobart, including all Port Houghton drainages; and Unit 3.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED?

Hunters, Department and AWT staff would be required to differentiate between moose antlers that have been recently damaged and/or broken, and antlers with older damage and/or breaks when evaluating compliance with the spike-fork provision in the RM038 moose antler restrictions.

The Wrangell Fish and Game Advisory Committee clarified to the department that their intent is for the proposed regulation to apply to the entire RM038 hunt area, and not just the Unit 1 and Unit 3 portions of the hunt area.

BACKGROUND:

In 2006, the Board adopted a joint AWT and ADF&G proposal addressing the issue of moose antlers being intentionally altered to conform to the existing antler restrictions. As a result of the board’s action, a “damaged, broken, or altered antler” is no longer considered a spike-fork antler in Units 1-5. While the board’s initial action applied the “damaged, broken or altered antler” regulation to all moose hunts within Units 1-5, the regulation was later rescinded for areas outside of the RM038 hunt area.

The “damaged, broken or altered” antler regulation is deemed necessary to clarify the existing antler restrictions for moose in the RM038 moose hunt, and to exclude from harvest those bulls with antlers that only satisfy the antler point requirements as a result of either naturally occurring breaks or man-made modifications. Prior to implementation of the “damaged, broken or altered” antler regulation, bulls were being harvested with broken antlers, or antlers were being modified after harvest to conform to the point requirements specified in the spike-fork provision of the existing antler regulations. Such antler modifications circumvented the intent of the antler restrictions, compromised the selective harvest strategy, and posed a potential threat to the future productivity of the herd.

Because the proponents refer specifically to “*An antler that was broken while growing and is visibly grown around or over ...*” by inference any such allowable damage would have to have occurred while antlers were in velvet and still developing. The overwhelming majority of bulls in the RM038 hunt area have completed antler development and shed their velvet prior to the start

of the hunt. Nonetheless, it may be possible to modify a recently damage antler to make it appear as though the damage occurred while the antler was growing.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: Oppose. It is not possible for hunters, AWT or staff to reliably determine when antlers were damaged and/or broken. Bulls with antlers that only meet the specified antler configuration as a result of either naturally occurring or intentional breaks are typically within the age classes the existing antler restrictions are designed to protect for breeding purposes. As a result, the “damaged, broken, or altered” antler regulation remains an important component of the RM038 selective harvest strategy.

Although differentiating between “older” versus “more recent” antler damage may be possible in situations where such damage is obviously old, or obviously recent, any such regulation will likely create a “gray area” in which such a determination becomes difficult or impossible. It will be problematic to develop a workable definition of what constitutes “older” versus “newer” damage or breaks to an antler. Evaluating compliance with this regulation will inevitably require AWT and department staff to make subjective determinations as to whether damage to an antler is the result of an older or more recent occurrence.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 7 – 5 AAC 92.990. Definitions. Define “points” for forked moose antlers for the RM038 registration hunt in Unit 1C as follows:

Small points originating from the antler base shorter than the ear will not be counted in making a forked antler moose illegal for registration hunt, RM038.

PROPOSED BY: Wrangell Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO?

This proposal is explicit to the “forked” antler provision in the RM038 antler restrictions. If adopted, Alaska Wildlife Troopers and ADF&G staff would be required to disregard (ignore) any additional points emerging from the base of an otherwise “forked” antler that are “shorter than the moose’s ear” when evaluating compliance with the “forked” antler provision in the RM038 antler restrictions.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

5 AAC 92.990. (26) “moose antler” definitions:

(B) “spiked-fork antlers” means antlers of a bull moose with only one or two tines on at least one antler; for the purpose of this subparagraph, male calves are not considered spike-fork bulls;

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED?

If adopted, this proposal could increase the harvest of bull moose intended to be protected by the selective harvest strategy (i.e., 3 point moose). The Wrangell Fish and Game Advisory Committee clarified to the department that their intent is for the proposed regulation to apply within the entire RM038 hunt area, and not just the Unit 1(C) portion. Therefore, the affected

area would include Unit 1(B); that portion of Unit 1(C) south of Port Hobart, including all Port Houghton drainages; and Unit 3.

BACKGROUND:

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 and 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, however, for antler projections emerging from the base of the antler to be large conspicuous points measuring 10 or more inches in length; this can influence whether a particular antler configuration is or is not compliant with the existing antler regulations.

The Board has received several proposals over the years attempting to define various moose antler parts and address concerns related to the relatively high percentage of “non-typical” antler configurations found in Southeast Alaska.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS:

Oppose. The definition of antler point or tine is a statewide regulation. It would be very confusing to have different definitions for the same word in different parts of the state. The intent of the selective harvest strategy (SHS) is to provide harvest opportunity while preserving an adequate number of bull moose for breeding purposes. The current RM038 Selective Harvest Strategy (SHS) has been very successful at providing opportunity for harvest without overharvest. The annual harvest has shown an increasing trend, and the fall 2014 harvest of 106 moose was the second highest on record for the area. In addition, unlike other antler restricted hunts in Southeast Alaska, additional harvest opportunity is provided by allowing hunters to take bulls with 2 brow tines on both antlers.

The number of animals disqualified as a result of small, hard-to-see burr points is extremely small. Because moose with 3 points (i.e., forked antler plus burr point) on both antlers have long been protected under the current SHS and we do not possess a lot of age data from this segment of the RM038 moose population. However, a portion of these moose would likely fall into the age categories the SHS is intended to protect.

Should the Board adopt this proposal the burr/base should be defined in regulation, and we recommend replacing “the length of a moose’s ear” with an established length limit in inches. We are concerned, however, that ignoring burr points of a specified length could result in additional violations as hunters attempt to gauge whether or not a projection off the base of an otherwise forked antler is less than the allowable length limit. 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, and attempts to address burr points within the RM038 hunt area will likely have regional, and possibly statewide, implications.

As a result of specific antler regulations that are not employed elsewhere in Alaska, the RM038 antler regulations are already the most complex, and liberal, anywhere in the state. Adding an additional provision to address relatively uncommon burr points on forked antlers will only

further complicate the existing antler regulations. Because of the complexity of outcomes and the infrequency of occurrence of this condition, the department believes it is best to not change the existing regulation.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 8 – 5 AAC 85.040 hunting seasons and bag limits for goats. Establish a resident drawing hunt for goats in Unit 4, Sitka area, as follows:

Unit 4: One goat by drawing permit, Aug. 1–Dec. 31; residents only.

PROPOSED BY: Michael Ashton.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would establish a resident only drawing permit for goats in the portion of Unit 4 adjacent to Sitka, Alaska.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season	Nonresident Open Season
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Remainder of Unit 1(D), and Units 4 and 5	Aug. 1-Dec. 31	Aug. 1-Dec. 31
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1 goat by registration permit only; the taking of nannies with kids is prohibited

Federal season dates, bag limits, and permit requirements are the same as the state's.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If adopted, this proposal would create the first resident only drawing hunt in Southeast Alaska and would likely limit opportunity to hunt mountain goats in the Sitka area of Unit 4.

BACKGROUND: Mountain goats were transplanted on Baranof Island in 1923. The first hunt occurred in 1949 and was initially managed under a general season hunt. In 1976 a registration hunt (RG150) was initiated. Managers detected a decline in Unit 4 mountain goat numbers beginning in 2006. A high proportion of females in the harvest led the Department to implement a point system (male goat=1 point and female goat=2 points) in 2006. The continued decline in goat numbers appears to have persisted until 2011 or 2012. The current estimated goat population (<800 goats) represents a 47% decline since 2004 (est. 1,500 goats). The point

system is intended to allow for hunting opportunity but to discourage the harvest of female goats. Available points are determined based on the number of adult goats observed during aerial surveys (6 points per 100 adult goats observed). In addition to the point system, Baranof Island is divided into zones consisting of multiple watersheds based on historical and current population concentrations of goats; hunter access was also considered when identifying hunt areas. Recent harvests have averaged 21 goats per year. The current zone system has decreased the annual harvest of females over the last 3 years; shifted hunting effort to other areas on the island, and provided hunting opportunity to many hunters by closing small areas and allowing hunting to continue on most of the island. Since 2010, the female proportion of the harvest has decreased to <12%. In 2011 seasons were not opened in the Blue Lake-Medvejie River and South Fork of the Katlian River watersheds. These zones are the most easily accessed goat hunting areas and are adjacent to the community of Sitka. Closing the season resulted in reduced hunter-related mortality for goats in areas receiving the highest hunter effort, which allowed for a stabilization of the population decline.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: Neutral. This proposal has two primary considerations: allocation and opportunity. The proposal would allocate drawing permits to resident hunters. The majority of mountain goat hunters in Unit 4 are Alaska residents. The RG150 hunt is available to nonresident hunters but due to logistics and expense of accessing hunting areas most effort is limited to residents. Drawing hunts are used most often when harvestable surpluses are low and opportunity is limited. The present registration hunt and zone management strategy for Unit 4 mountain goat hunting is successful. It appears the mountain goat decline on Baranof Island has been stabilized with no further loss of hunting opportunity. This strategy maximizes opportunity and still protects the female component of the herd by triggering an emergency order closure of the hunting season in the specific zones where the guideline harvest level (GHL) has been met; hunting seasons remain open in areas where the GHL has not been reached.

COST ANALYSIS: The department would incur costs to administer a drawing permit if this proposal were adopted.

PROPOSAL 9 – 5 AAC 85.030. Hunting seasons and bag limits for deer.

PROPOSED BY: Nicholas Orr.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Increase the resident bag limit for deer in Unit 4 Remainder to six deer, of which the last two must be bucks.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season	Nonresident Open Season
...		
Remainder of Unit 4 4 deer; however, only bucks may be taken before Sept. 15	Aug. 1-Dec. 31	Aug. 1-Dec. 31

Federally qualified hunters may take up 6 deer total (bucks only before Sept. 15) through January 31.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If adopted, this proposal would increase resident hunter bag limits by two deer. This proposal would primarily affect hunters from Juneau, Ketchikan, and Saxman because they are the only communities in Southeast Alaska that the Federal Subsistence Board considers to be non-rural; rural residents are recognized as federally qualified. The proposed increase in the bag limit would benefit few hunters because most do not harvest what is currently allowed.

BACKGROUND: Unit 4 is composed of Admiralty, Baranof, and Chichagof islands, as well as numerous smaller islands adjacent to those listed above. Approximately 90% of the Unit is comprised of federal public lands. The “Remainder of Unit 4” does not include northeast Chichagof Island where the bag limit is 3 deer, bucks only through September 14. The difference in bag limits is due to high hunter effort in this portion of the Unit and access provided by an extensive road system.

Deer densities are variable across the Unit but it is generally accepted that some of the highest densities of deer in Southeast Alaska are found in Unit 4. Hunter access is primarily by boat and airplane; however, vehicles are used near communities and in areas with accessible logging roads. Most hunting occurs near the shoreline. Between 1985 and 1993 the Board received many proposals for deer season and bag limit changes. These proposals were largely driven by apparent or perceived changes in the deer population due to weather and habitat modification through logging; and to meet state and federal subsistence requirements. The current regulations were adopted in 1994.

Successful hunters average 2.3 deer per hunter, well below the state bag limit of 4 deer. Residents of Unit 4, Gustavus, Haines, Kake, Klukwan, Petersburg, Pt. Baker, Port Protection, Wrangell, and Yakutat may hunt deer in Unit 4 as federally qualified hunters. Federally qualified hunters have a 6 deer bag limit and may hunt an additional 31 days beyond the state season. Both state (proxy) and federal (designated hunter) regulations provide opportunities to hunt for individuals who are unable to hunt.

The board has found there are customary and traditional uses of deer in Unit 4, and that 5,200–6,000 deer are reasonably necessary for subsistence in all of Unit 4.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: Neutral. While the additional harvest of buck deer will likely not have a negative impact on deer numbers in this portion of Unit 4, unutilized opportunity is currently available to hunters.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 10 – 5 AAC 85.030 Hunting seasons and bag limits for deer.

PROPOSED BY: Jay Beedle.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Change “any deer” resident season to October 15 - December 31 for portions of Unit 1C and all of Unit 4.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

Unit 1C

	<u>Resident Open Season</u>	<u>Nonresident Open Season</u>
Unit 1C, that portion 31 Including Douglas, Lincoln, Shelter, and Sullivan islands 4 deer; however, only bucks may be taken before Sept. 15	Aug. 1-Dec. 31	Aug. 1-Dec.
Remainder of Unit 1C 31 2 bucks	Aug. 1-Dec. 31	Aug. 1-Dec.

Unit 4

Unit 4, that portion of Chichagof Island east of Port Frederick and north of Tenakee Inlet, including all drainages into Tenakee Inlet: 3 deer; however, only bucks	Aug. 1-Dec. 31	Aug. 1-Dec. 31
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may be taken before Sept.15

Remainder of Unit 4

Aug. 1-Dec. 31

Aug. 1-Dec. 31

4 deer; however, only bucks
may be taken before Sept. 15

Federally qualified hunters may take up 6 deer total (bucks only before Sept. 15) through January 31.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If adopted, this proposal would restrict the harvest of does and antlerless deer before October 15, a 31 day reduction in the current “any deer” season. The proposals may also reduce the fawn deer mortality by not allowing the harvest of doe deer unit Oct. 15, which would provide more time than is currently available for does to care for fawns. The additional time will allow for additional fawn growth and weight gain, and for the fawns to be better prepared to survive on their own.

BACKGROUND:

Unit 4

Unit 4 is composed of Admiralty, Baranof, and Chichagof islands as well as numerous smaller islands adjacent to those listed above. Approximately 90% of the Unit is comprised of federal public lands. Deer densities are variable across the Unit but it is generally accepted that some of the highest densities of deer in Southeast Alaska are found in the Unit. Hunter access is primarily by boat and airplane and vehicles are used near communities and in areas with accessible logging roads. Most hunting occurs near the shoreline. Hunters take an average of 5,800 deer per year and an estimated 27% of the harvest is female. Brown bears are the only large predators in the Unit. While some bear predation, fawns primarily, occurs, little is known about predation rates and whether they are significant factors for the deer population; weather is the primary factor affecting deer numbers in Unit 4. The current regulations were adopted in 1994.

The board has found there are customary and traditional uses of deer in Unit 4, and that 5,200–6,000 deer are reasonably necessary for subsistence in all of Unit 4.

Unit 1C

A high proportion of Unit 1C deer hunters target the Units' islands (Douglas, Shelter, Lincoln, Sullivan). Due to their proximity to Juneau, Douglas, Shelter and Lincoln islands all receive a significant amount of hunter effort. Douglas provides hunter access from an extensive road system and Shelter and Lincoln islands are easily accessible by small boat. Sullivan Island receives less effort and most hunters come from Haines by boat. Current deer seasons and bag limits have been in effect since 1991.

Hunters took an average of 302 deer on Douglas; 26 deer on Shelter Island; 9 deer on Lincoln Island; and 18 deer on Sullivan Island during the period 2004-2013. The average success rate for the islands combined is 31%. An estimated 36% of the Unit 1C island harvest is female deer.

The board has found there are customary and traditional uses of deer in Unit 1C and that 30-40 deer are reasonably necessary for subsistence.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: Neutral. There are currently no conservation concerns with deer populations in Units 1C or 4. Although the harvest of fawns or doe deer with fawns is not approved of by some, fawns are a component of the population that has high natural mortality even under non-hunting scenarios. Natural fawn mortality rates have been estimated to range from 31% to 65% and the additive mortality caused by hunters may have an impact on deer in small geographic areas, such as islands, but overall little impact on the Units as a whole. While the proposal would provide additional time for fawn growth it is likely many would die because they are not nutritionally prepared to survive on their own. In addition, antlerless deer would still be legal to harvest and would include deer who have not bred and those that are pregnant; harvesting these deer is essentially the same as harvesting does with fawns and fawns because both scenarios result in no contribution to the population.

Population indices, such as pellet surveys, winter beach surveys, harvest data and anecdotal information, indicate stable or increasing deer numbers throughout Unit 4 and the Unit 1C islands under current seasons and bag limits. Managers do not have habitat capability data for the areas affected by this proposal; however, in winter 2006/2007 a significant number of deer were lost in both Unit 4 and 1C due to starvation when deep snow restricted movement and access to available forage. This event suggests some level of female deer harvest is appropriate to keep overall deer numbers at a level the habitat can support during even the worst winter snowfalls. Emergency orders closing the antlerless deer season after extreme winters have proven successful in assisting the natural rebuilding of deer numbers.

If adopted, the board should consider if the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses of deer in Unit 4 and Unit 1C.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 11 – 5 AAC 85.020. Hunting seasons and bag limits for brown bears

PROPOSED BY: Brad Dennison

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Establish separate brown bear registration hunts for nonresident hunters hunting with resident relative within second-degree kindred in Unit 4.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season	Nonresident Open Season
...		
	RB088	
Unit 4	Mar. 15-May 31	Mar. 15-May 31
One bear every four regulatory years by registration permit only	RB089	
	Mar. 15-May 20	Mar. 15-May 20
	RB077	
	Sept. 15-Dec. 31	Sept. 15-Dec. 31

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If adopted, this proposal would limit the number of nonresident kin hunters to guidelines recommended by the Unit 4 Brown Bear Management Strategy (BBMS). In addition, the proposal would add three additional nonresident relative hunts not recommended in the BBMS to account for the addition of Northeast Chichagof Island as a unique portion of Unit 4.

BACKGROUND: The Unit 4 Brown Bear Management Strategy (BBMS) is a consensus based document crafted around both biological and social issues for the management and conservation of brown bear in Unit 4. The BBMS recommended 4 non-resident kin hunts be authorized each year. Since 2006, the number of non-resident kin hunters registering for this type of hunt has increased significantly and ranged from 16 to 30 per year. Brown bear harvest from these hunters averages 8 bears/year. Sealing records indicate a high percentage of females (33%) and small bears are harvested.

The BBMS recommends hunt limits for non-resident kin hunts and guided nonresident hunts. Guided hunts are controlled through Guide Use Area allocations made by the U.S. Forest Service on public land and Sealaska and Huna Totem corporations for their respective private lands in Unit 4. The BBMS makes these recommendations as part of a strategy to maintain a 3-year average human-caused bear mortality rate of no more than 4% in the Unit.

The BBMS provides approximately 70 recommendations for the long term management of brown bears in Unit 4. Some recommendations are difficult to achieve because of the cost or cooperation required across state, federal, and private organizations. But since the BBMS was accepted in 2000, the department has worked with organizations representing various landowners/resource agencies, special interest groups, the Alaska Board of Game, and other entities to achieve progress on as many of the recommendations as possible. The non-resident relative component is the only non-resident hunter group not currently following the hunt allocation recommended by the BBMS.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: Neutral. This is an allocation issue. Should the board wish to adopt this proposal the Department recommends the following to ensure hunts are consistent with the BBMS and the Board’s 2012 changes that recognized Northeast Chichagof as a unique portion of Unit 4 for bear management. Allocating permits by inside and outside drainages is the simplest way to incorporate NE Chichigof as a separate management area.

Spring Hunt Inside Drainages - 2 permits annually

Spring Hunt Outside Drainages - 2 permits annually

Fall Hunt - 3 permits annually

The three additional non-resident kin hunts are to account for the addition of Northeast Chichagof Island as a unique portion of Unit 4 as recommended in the original BBMS.

Permits will be available online only and the application process will be closed when the allocated number of permits has been issued. The first 4 applicants for the spring inside and outside drainages hunts, and the first 6 applicants in the fall hunt, will receive permits. Two additional permits for each of the spring hunts and 3 for the fall hunt will be awarded to provide hunting opportunity in cases where the original permit holders are not able to hunt; however, these permits will not be valid until the holders are notified by the department.

The board may want to consider a drawing hunt as simpler alternative to a registration hunt.

COST ANALYSIS: The department will incur minor expenses associated with the development, printing and administrative management of newly created permits.

PROPOSAL 12 – 5 AAC 84.270; 85.056. Trapping seasons and bag limits; hunting seasons and bag limits for wolf.

PROPOSED BY: James Bauers.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO?

1. All persons harvesting a wolf must attach a locking tag to the animal at kill site.
2. Restrict the possession of trapped wolves to only the trapper whose name is on trap/snare.
3. Trap sites would need to be registered.
4. Create a combined hunting and trapping bag limit of five wolves annually.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

Trapping

Unit 2 Dec. 1-Mar. 31 No limit

Wolves taken in Unit 2 must be sealed on or before the fourteenth day after the date of taking.

Hunting

Unit 2 Dec. 1-Mar. 31 Five wolves

Wolves taken in Unit 2 must be sealed within 30 days after the date of taking.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If adopted this proposal will implement an individual hunter/trapper combined bag limit for Unit 2 wolves, and will provide for very specific actions (trap registration and tagging) to associate a harvested wolf with the individual who took the animal.

BACKGROUND: In April 2014 the US Fish and Wildlife Service issued a positive 90 day finding on a petition to list the Alexander Archipelago Wolf as threatened or endangered. The Department is currently authorized to set an annual harvest quota of up to 30% of the estimated fall wolf population. In 2013 the harvest cap was set at 60 wolves; the season was closed by emergency order when 57 wolves had been taken.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: Neutral. The Department, in cooperation with the US Forest Service, is currently developing an efficient method to reliably and regularly estimate wolf abundance in Unit 2. The fall 2013 preseason estimate was 221 wolves (95% CI 130-378). As a conservative measure, the Department, in collaboration with the US Forest Service, is planning to lower the harvest quota to 25 wolves for the 2014 season.

The proponent is concerned that a lower quota (25 wolves) will result in a trapping season that has the potential to close quickly by emergency order. A combined (hunting and trapping) bag limit of five wolves may provide opportunity to more trappers/hunters by limiting the wolf harvest of an individual. The locking tags, trap site registration, and only allowing the trapper associated with a set to seal wolves, would prevent efforts for teams of trappers to exceed the proposed 5 wolf bag limit for an individual. In Unit 2 there is a small, dedicated group of trappers who work together and have been responsible for approximately 50% of the harvest over the past 5-10 years.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal would result in some additional staff time registering wolf trap sets.

PROPOSAL 13 – 5 AAC 92.008 Harvest guideline levels.

PROPOSED BY: Greenpeace, Center for Biological Diversity and The Boat Company.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO?

1. All causes of human related take of Unit 2 wolves (reported, illegal and wounding loss) will be accounted for in the Department's annual harvest limit of 30% of the estimated fall population.
2. The Department will adjust the 30% harvest limit if it determines that natural mortality is exceeding 8%.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? 5 AAC 92.008. (1)Wolves: the annual harvest of wolves in Unit 2 should not exceed 30 percent of the unit wide, preseason population estimate by the department.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Wolves taken illegally and wounding loss would be included in the Department's 30% harvest limit. Also, harvest limits would be adjusted if natural mortality was found to be in excess of 8%. Lower annual harvests of legal reported wolves would likely occur.

BACKGROUND: In April 2014 the US Fish and Wildlife Service issued a positive 90 day finding on a petition to list the Alexander Archipelago Wolf as threatened or endangered. In 2013 the wolf season was closed early by emergency order in Unit 2 after 57 wolves were taken.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: Oppose. The Department currently manages wolves in Unit 2 based on a harvest of 30% of the estimated fall population. Only reported wolves are included in the 30% total, although it is recognized there has been some unreported harvest. The Department has submitted Proposal 14 to change the management strategy for harvesting 30% of the estimated fall population to 20% as well as to require mandatory reporting of wounding loss. The Department and US Forest Service are currently developing techniques to more accurately and efficiently estimate wolf abundance in Southeast Alaska. The Department plans to reduce the annual harvest quota to 25 wolves in 2014.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is expected to result in significant additional costs to the department. The proposal would require annual estimation of total mortality which would be extremely expensive given poor access to much of the area, especially federal wilderness. Achieving adequate sample sizes of radio-collared wolves for survival estimation throughout Unit 2 would be prohibitively expensive, if not logistically impossible.

PROPOSAL 14 – 5 AAC 92.008. Harvest guideline levels and 5AAC 92.130 restrictions to bag limit.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO?

1. Reduce the annual harvest of Unit 2 wolves to 20% of the estimated fall population.
2. Wolves wounded and lost would count toward that person's bag limit and toward annual harvest limits.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

1. The annual harvest of wolves in Unit 2 should not exceed 30 percent of the unit wide, preseason population as estimated by the department.
2. Wolves wounded and lost are currently not accounted for in yearly harvest totals.

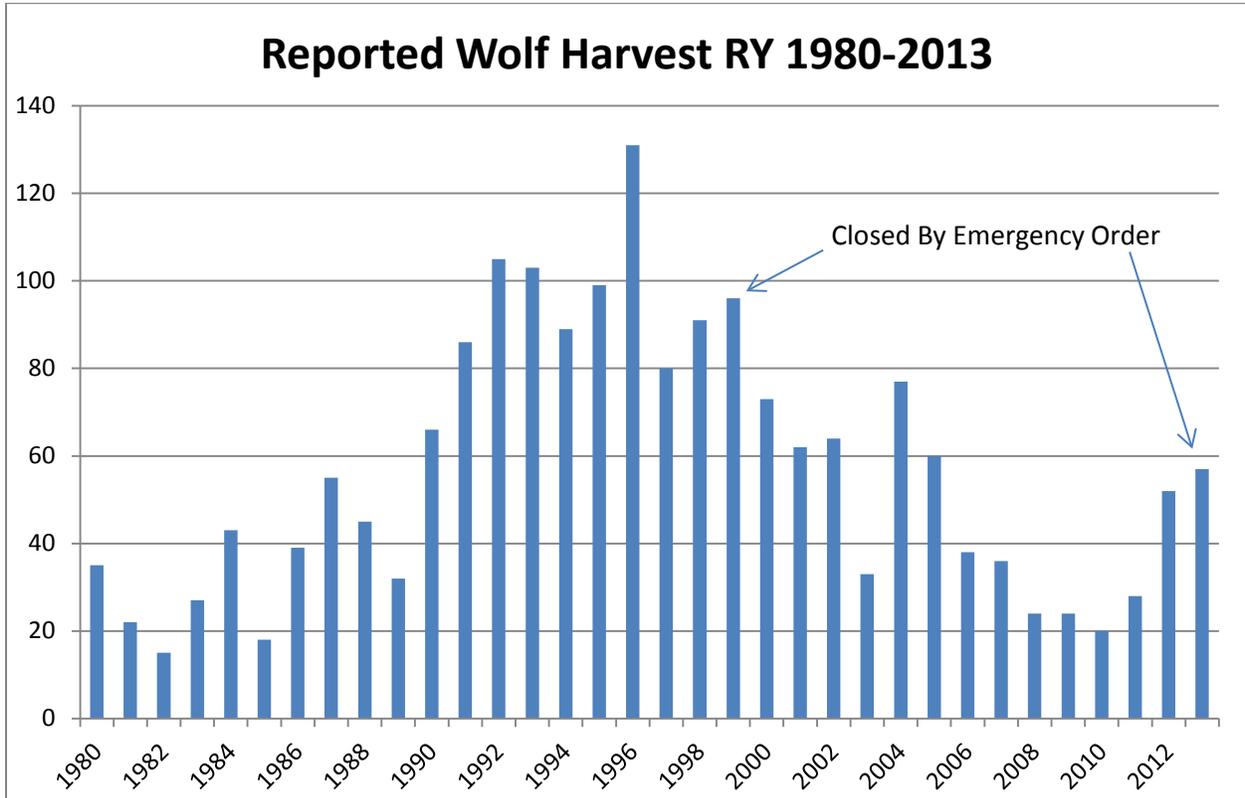
WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Lowered annual harvest limits and previously unreported wolves would be potentially included in annual harvest totals.

BACKGROUND: Under Board direction, the Department sets an annual harvest cap of up to 30% of the estimated fall wolf population. In 2013 the cap was 60 wolves and the season was closed early by emergency order.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: Support. The Department's current management strategy of allowing for a reported harvest in Unit 2 of up to 30% of the estimated fall wolf population has been found to be sustainable. This harvest rate was determined by research on Prince of Wales Island. However, the Department had previously identified that unreported take was a substantive factor in a study area in an accessible portion of Unit 2. Unreported take has not been found to be a substantive factor in other wolf studies in Alaska. In the past, managers have considered unreported take when setting the harvest quota. Reducing the upper annual harvest limit from 30% to 20% of the estimated fall unit-wide population is reasoned to better reflect the department's wolf management strategy. This change ensures in regulation that wolves are currently managed in Unit 2 at levels unaffected by human harvest and to demonstrate that human take of wolves can be effectively managed in Unit 2. In April 2014 the US Fish and Wildlife Service issued a positive 90 day finding on a petition to list wolves in SE Alaska, particularly on Prince of Wales Island, as threatened or endangered and identified human take as a potential threat.

In addition to reducing the annual harvest rate, by requiring wolf hunters and trappers to report wounded and lost wolves, the Department can more accurately document annual wolf mortality and implement appropriate management actions when necessary. Both the reduction in harvest levels and reporting of wounded or lost wolves has met with general approval from the local trapping community. In addition, outreach programs to engender cooperation and understanding of the need for complete reporting and harvest monitoring, and to demonstrate the ability for agencies to restrict take of a petitioned population, appear to have been well-received by the trapping community.

COST ANALYSIS: The approval of this proposal will result in some increased administration costs to the department.



PROPOSAL 15 – 5 AAC 92.095. Unlawful methods of taking furbearers. PROPOSED BY: James Bauers.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Allow the use of firearms to take beaver in Unit 2.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? It is unlawful to take a beaver by any means other than a steel trap or snare.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? It would be lawful to take beaver in Unit 2 by firearm.

BACKGROUND: As noted above, under current trapping regulations it is illegal to take beavers with a firearm in Southeast Alaska. For most furbearer species this is the case, except that river otters may be taken with a firearm under a trapping license, and nuisance wildlife permits can authorize the use of firearms to remove beavers. Public safety and concerns with

lost animals have been cited most often in Southeast when discussing the use of firearms to take beavers. Several Units in south-central, western, northern and interior Alaska have provisions for taking beavers with a firearm; trappers in these areas often want beavers for consumption. Trappers cite meat quality as the primary reasons for wanting to shoot, rather than trap, beavers.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: Neutral. Beaver harvest in Unit 2 has ranged from 53 to 309 over the past decade (average 185/year). The annual harvest in Unit 2 is typically 61% of the entire Southeast Alaska harvest. Harvests are more a function of trapper interest and fur prices rather than abundance. Currently populations are high. The Department receives several requests each year for nuisance beaver permits as well as complaints about beaver activity impeding salmon streams. The additional take of beaver in Unit 2 that would result from this proposal poses no conservation concern.

If the board is considering allowing firearms to take beaver, it should consider extending this proposal to all of Southeast Alaska (Units 1-5).

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 16 – 5 AAC 99.025. Customary and traditional uses of game populations.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would modify the amount reasonably necessary for subsistence uses for deer in Game Management Unit (GMU) 5 by establishing the amount reasonable necessary for subsistence (ANS) range to replace the finding of 100% of allowable harvest.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There is a positive customary and traditional (C&T) use finding for deer in GMU 5 and the current (ANS) is 100% of the allowable harvest (5 AAC 99.025(a)(5)). Currently, two hunts are authorized in GMU 5A: a general harvest ticket hunt from November 1–30 with a one buck bag limit, and a youth-only harvest ticket hunt October 15–31, also with a one buck harvest limit. Both hunts are open to nonresidents. There is no open season in GMU 5B.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If adopted this proposal would provide a range for the number of deer in GMU 5 that are reasonably necessary for subsistence for Alaska residents.

BACKGROUND:

Sitka black-tailed deer occur mainly on islands and the eastern mainland of Yakutat Bay. There is little potential for the herd to increase due to extreme weather conditions and limited deer habitat. A management goal for GMU 5A is to allow for a harvest of 1 buck during a 1-month season.

There are no state or federal open seasons in GMU 5B due to the absence of deer in the Subunit. The department has no conservation concerns for deer in GMU 5, and so this proposal provides the board an opportunity to re-evaluate the ANS range.

In November 1992, the board reaffirmed that deer populations in GMU 5 are customarily and traditionally taken for subsistence. The C&T finding was reviewed to ensure that it was in

compliance with the new 1992 state subsistence law, which included new provisions to establish nonsubsistence areas, as well as a new provision requiring ANS findings. At the same meeting, the board made the ANS range 100% of the allowable harvest since there were few deer in GMU 5. The hunt in GMU 5 had just been reestablished in 1991 after being closed from 1980–1990, so there were no recent data on which to base an ANS.

Table 16-1 shows the harvest of deer in GMU 5A by residency of hunters from 1997–2012, years with available harvest in the department Winfonet database. The recent 10-year average harvest by residents of GMU 5A is 30 deer and by all Alaska residents is 31 deer. Most of the harvest is taken by residents of Southeast Alaska residing in GMUs 1–5.

Table 16-1.–Annual estimated harvest of deer in GMU 5A by residency (GMU) of hunters in Southeast Alaska and residency of hunters in other areas, 1997–2012.

Year	Harvest by GMU of residency					Other Alaska	Alaska Subtotal	Outside Alaska	Residency Unknown	Grand Total
	GMU 1	GMU 2	GMU 4	GMU 5	Subtotal					
1997	0			0	0	5	5			5
1998				5	5	0	5			5
2001				4	4	0	4			4
2002				15	15	0	15			15
2003	0			28	28	0	28			28
2004	9		8	21	38	0	38			38
2005		6		22	28	6	34	5		39
2006	20	1		21	42	0	42			42
2007			6	13	19	0	19			19
2008				32	32	0	32	5		37
2009				21	21	0	21			21
2010	0			24	24	6	30			30
2011				49	49	2	51		2	53
2012				19	19	0	19		0	19
					5-Year Harvest Average		29			32
					10-Year Harvest Average		30			33
					Historical Harvest Average		23			25

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: **Neutral.** However, if the ANS is not modified, nonresident opportunities for deer hunting may not be in alignment with the subsistence law (AS 16.05.258).

A report with options for ANS ranges can be found in RC 2 on the board website for the Southeast Region meeting at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=gameboard.meetinginfo&date=01-09-2015&meeting=juneau>

COST ANALYSIS: This proposal is not expected to provide an additional cost for a member of the public to participate.

PROPOSAL 17 – 5 AAC 85.030. Hunting seasons and bag limits for deer.

PROPOSED BY: Nicholas Orr.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Increase the resident bag limit for deer on Lincoln, Shelter, and Sullivan islands, in Unit 1C, to six deer with the last two being bucks. All other regulatory requirements for deer would remain the same.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

<u>Units and Bag Limits</u>	<u>Resident and Nonresident Hunters</u>	
Unit 1C	1 Aug–31 Dec	4 deer; antlerless deer
Douglas, Lincoln, Shelter, Sullivan Islands		may be taken only from 15 Sep–31 Dec
Unit 1C Remainder	1 Aug–31 Dec	2 antlered deer

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal would increase the 4 deer bag limit on Shelter, Sullivan, and Lincoln islands to 6 deer; and may result in additional hunter pressure that could limit hunter opportunity.

BACKGROUND: Shelter and Lincoln islands are small islands located near Juneau. Both islands are easily accessible by small boat. Shelter Island is approximately 8 miles long and is characterized by moderate level topography, coniferous forests, dense brush and sporadic muskeg complexes. Lincoln Island is adjacent to the northwest portion of Shelter Island and is characterized by low elevation topography, dense brush and relatively extensive muskeg complexes. Sullivan Island is found in northern Lynn Canal approximately 10 miles southeast of Haines, Alaska, and less than a mile from the mainland near the Sullivan River. Sullivan Island is characterized by low elevation topography, coniferous forests and dense brush. Deer were introduced to Sullivan Island in 1951 and 1954, and unlike Shelter and Lincoln Islands, deer on Sullivan Island compete with moose originating from the mainland. Current deer seasons and bag limits have been in effect since 1991.

The Department attempts to conduct pellet surveys on Shelter and Sullivan islands every few years; Lincoln Island is rarely surveyed. The most recent surveys for Shelter, Lincoln, and Sullivan islands were 2013, 2006, and 2012, respectively. Pellet survey results for Shelter Island (2.14 groups/plot) and Sullivan Island (1.47 groups/plot) are considered moderate to high densities; Sullivan Island (0.84 groups/plot) is considered to be low density. While pellet surveys are not a direct indication of the deer population, long term trends provide some insight into the variability of deer numbers on the islands.

A high proportion of Unit 1C deer hunters target islands (Douglas, Shelter, Lincoln, Sullivan) close to communities for hunting opportunities. Due to their proximity to Juneau, Shelter and

Lincoln islands both receive a significant amount of hunter effort. Between regulatory years 2003 and 2013, an average of 58 hunters per year took 26 deer annually (1.3 deer per successful hunter) on Shelter Island. On Lincoln Island an average of 29 hunters per year took 9 deer annually (.72 deer per successful hunter). Success rates for deer hunters on Shelter and Lincoln islands for the same period was 37% and 27%, respectfully. Sullivan Island deer harvest data are combined with data from harvests from a small portion of the Chilkat Range mainland near the Sullivan River. Few people hunt this portion of the Unit 1C mainland and successful hunts are rare; since 2006, 100% of the harvest in this area was on Sullivan Island. On Sullivan Island between 2003 and 2013, an average of 30 hunters per year took 18 deer annually (1.4 deer per successful hunter); hunter success was 36%.

While limiting the last two deer of a hunter’s bag limit to bucks would not likely have population level impacts to deer herds on the islands, hunters may find it difficult to differentiate between sexes after antler drop; additional doe harvest from populations that may be limited by habitat and harvest could have significant impacts. A fair number of hunters hunt these islands with low to moderate levels of success. A change in the islands’ bag limit may be positive for a few hunters, but will likely result in a decrease in the overall success for deer hunters on Shelter, Lincoln and Sullivan islands.

The board has found there are customary and traditional uses of deer in Unit 1C, and that 30–40 deer are reasonably necessary for subsistence uses of deer in Unit 1C.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: Neutral. If the additional harvest is bucks, we have no conservation concerns. It is worthy to note however, that hunter success is low, pellet counts are relatively low, and very few hunters are going to benefit from a 6 deer bag limit because 4 are rarely taken. In addition it may be difficult to identify bucks once antlers drop and additional harvest of does is not desirable due to already low success rates.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 18 – 5 AAC 85.040

PROPOSED BY: Michael Ashton.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would establish a mountain goat archery drawing hunt area around Juneau.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

Season and bag limits

Unit 1(C), that portion bounded by Montana
 Creek Trail, McGinnis Creek to its
 Headwaters, then due north to the
 Edge of the south side of the Mendenhall
 Glacier, then north and west along the edge

Resident and nonresident hunters

No open season

Of the Mendenhall and Herbert Glacier, then
Along; the southwest side of the Herbert Glacier
And River back to the Montana Creek trail

1 goat, by drawing permit only;
up to 10 permits may be issued;
the taking of nannies
with kids is prohibited

Unit 1C, that portion
draining into Stephens Passage
between Eagle Glacier
and River and Point Salisbury

No open season.

Unit 1(C), that portion
draining into Stephens Passage
and Taku Inlet between Point
Salisbury and Taku Glacier

1 Oct–30 Nov
(General hunt only)

1 goat by registration
permit by bow and arrow only;
the taking of nannies with kids is
prohibited

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal would expand the RG014 (bow and arrow only) boundary west and north to increase opportunity and access to mountain goat in the Juneau vicinity. The proponent would like to create more mountain goat hunting opportunities for archers in Juneau. After talking to the proponent the intent of the proposal can be established by expanding the RG014 (bow and arrow only) area and provide further opportunity by maintaining the registration permit requirement.

BACKGROUND: The Division of Wildlife Conservation uses small geographic areas within hunt areas to manage mountain goat harvest in Southeast Alaska. Guideline harvest levels (GHL) are established for each area and are based on the allocation of points determined through aerial surveys (male goat= 1 point, female goat= 2 points) within each area. GHLs are established by allowing the harvest of 6 points per 100 adult goats seen during aerial surveys. Once the harvest has reached the GHL the hunt is closed by emergency order. The harvest of billies is encouraged to increase opportunity to other hunters and ensure the long term sustainability of the localized populations.

The proponent of this proposal would like to see additional areas with better access opened to archery hunting for mountain goat in the Juneau vicinity. He intentionally left the area and methods open for the Department to decide what would be best for the mountain goat population. An aerial mountain goat survey conducted from the Mendenhall Glacier to the Taku Glacier resulted in 362 total goats (291 adults, 71 kids), with 44% of the goats detected inside the existing archery only hunt area (RG014). The numbers of goats observed outside of the current boundary and distributed closer to town suggests that there is potential for additional harvest; however, boundary expansions from RG014 have not been determined at this time. Groups of nanny and kid goats are regularly seen in the Lemon Creek and Salmon Creek drainages, and single or small groups of animals are distributed evenly from Mt. Bullard to the RG014 boundary. Should this proposal be adopted the Department intends to continue to use the current mountain goat management strategies by determining GHLs based on the number of adult goats detected during aerial surveys (male goat= 1 point, female goat= 2 points), and to allocate harvest points within smaller hunt areas to ensure hunting pressure harvest is not disproportionate to those areas with easy access to hunting areas. Historically, most hunters in the bow and arrow only areas successfully harvest male mountain goat due to the need to get close during their harvest.

There are several areas around Juneau (e.g., Mount Juneau, Thunder Mountain, and Mount Bullard) where goats can be readily viewed. Ensuring that wildlife viewing opportunities remain available can be considered in determining the hunt boundaries. Other considerations are that Juneau has a well-developed and maintained trail system that allows recreational user groups to gain easy access to several mountain ranges all around town. Beginning July 1, 2016, all big game hunters using archery will be required to have successfully completed a department approved certification course (NBEF/IBEP). Currently, this is required if the hunt is restricted to archery only.

The board has found there are customary and traditional uses of mountain goats in Unit 1C outside the Juneau Nonsubsistence Area, and that the amount reasonably necessary for subsistence is 25–30 goats in that area.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: Neutral. This is an allocation issue. Additional hunting opportunity can be accommodated in this area. If the board is inclined to provide additional archery opportunity, the department recommends amending this proposal to provide the opportunity in a manner that recognizes access considerations and goat viewing patterns while still providing for a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses. The Department currently has a mountain goat hunting area established for archery only, adjacent to the Juneau road system (RG014), which can be accessed from multiple trails on the Juneau road system.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 19 – 5 AAC 85.040. Hunting seasons and bag limits for goat.

PROPOSED BY: Upper Lynn Canal Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would create a resident youth hunt for goats in Unit 1D, Tugahgo Mountain to town of Haines.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

Units and Bag Limits Nonresident Open	Resident Open Season (Subsistence And General Hunts)	Season
Unit 1(D), that portion 30 Between Taiya Inlet and River And the White Pass and Yukon Railroad 1 goat by registration permit only, and by bow and arrow only; the taking of nannies with kids is prohibited	Sept. 15-Nov. 30	Sept. 15-Nov.
Unit 1(D), that portion north And east of the Chilkat River, south Of the Canadian border, and south and west of the Ferebee River and Glacier 1 goat by registration permit only, the taking of nannies with kids is prohibited	Sept. 15-Nov. 15 (General Hunt Only)	Sept. 15-Nov. 15 (General Hunt Only)

Unit 1(D), that portion north of 30 the Haines Highway and west of Only) the Chikat River, between the Ferebee River and Glacier and Taiya River and Inlet, and between the White Pass and Yukon Railroad and the Katzehin River	Sept. 15-Nov. 30 (General Hunt Only)	Sept. 15-Nov. (General Hunt
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1 goat by registration permit
only, the taking of nannies with
kids is prohibited

Remainder of Unit 1(D), and Units 31 (General Hunt Only) 4 and 5 1 goat by registration permit only, the taking of nannies with kids is prohibited	Aug. 1-Dec. 31 (General Hunt Only)	Aug. 1-Dec.
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WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If adopted youth hunters would have access to mountain goat hunting close to Haines, on the road system and established trails.

BACKGROUND: The Division of Wildlife Conservation uses small geographic areas within hunt areas to manage mountain goat harvest in Southeast Alaska. Guideline harvest levels (GHL) are established for each area and are based on the allocation of points determined through aerial surveys (male goat= 1 point, female goat= 2 points) within each area. GHLs are established by allowing the harvest of 6 points per 100 adult goats seen during aerial surveys. Once the harvest has reached the GHL the hunt is closed by emergency order. The harvest of billies is encouraged to increase opportunity to other hunters and ensure the long term sustainability of the localized populations.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: Neutral, since this is an allocation issue; however, the department supports youth hunts as one way to protect our hunting heritage through hunter

recruitment and retention. This proposal was submitted by the Upper Lynn Canal Advisory Committee and therefore has community support. Historically the area of Tukgahgo Mountain was informally reserved as an area that people could take their children as an easily accessible mountain goat hunt close to town and off the road system. An established trail at the 7-mile saddle allows hunters to have easy access to the ridgelines. Over time hunters recognized the Tukgahgo Mountain area provided easy access with the ability to glass from the highway, hike up, harvest a goat and come down within a day. This has resulted in a GHL of 1 point because of the vulnerability of the goat population to overharvest and increasing interest of hunters. Emergency closures are generally issued within 1-5 days from the start of the season.

Haines is an area that has relatively limited options for harvest. Moose (Tier II only) , mountain goat, and black bear are species available for consumption. Over the years, the Board has created several youth hunts and in all the current youth hunts participants are required to have taken a hunter education course. The Department can make this a condition of the registration permit.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal may result in a slight cost increase if instructors travel to Haines to conduct hunter education classes more frequently.



PROPOSAL 20 – 5 AAC 85.040. Hunting seasons and bag limits for goat.

PROPOSED BY: Upper Lynn Canal Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would expand the resident goat season dates for RG023 and RG024 by merging them into registration permit RG026.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

Units and Bag Limits Nonresident Open	Resident Open	
	Season (Subsistence And General Hunts)	Season
Unit 1(D), that portion 30 Between Taiya Inlet and River And the White Pass and Yukon Railroad	Sept. 15-Nov. 30	Sept. 15-Nov.
1 goat by registration permit only, and by bow and arrow only; the taking of nannies with		

kids is prohibited

Unit 1(D), that portion north And east of the Chilkat River, south Of the Canadian border, and south and west of the Ferebee River and Glacier	Sept. 15-Nov. 15 (General Hunt Only)	Sept. 15-Nov. 15 (General Hunt Only)
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1 goat by registration permit
only, the taking of nannies with
kids is prohibited

Unit 1(D), that portion north of 30 the Haines Highway and west of Only) the Chilkat River, between the Ferebee River and Glacier and Taiya River and Inlet, and between the White Pass and Yukon Railroad and the Katzehin River	Sept. 15-Nov. 30 (General Hunt Only)	Sept. 15-Nov. (General Hunt
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1 goat by registration permit
only, the taking of nannies with
kids is prohibited

Remainder of Unit 1(D), and Units 31 (General Hunt Only)	Aug. 1-Dec. 31 (General Hunt Only)	Aug. 1-Dec.
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4 and 5

1 goat by registration permit
only, the taking of nannies with
kids is prohibited

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If adopted this proposal would allow additional hunting opportunity and late season access to a portion of RG023 and RG024 to include the upper Takshanuk Range (north of Goat Hollow to Klutshah Mountain), Tohitka and Raymond mountains, and the hunt area between the Haines Highway and Nataga Creek where there is little to no annual goat harvest. The proponent would like to create more mountain goat hunting opportunities in portions of RG023 and RG024 by allowing access later in the season. The intent of the proposal can be established by expanding the boundary of RG026 to include those portions of RG023 and RG024, as identified by the proponent, which would lengthen the season dates to August 1 – December 31.

BACKGROUND: The Division of Wildlife Conservation uses small geographic areas within hunt areas to manage mountain goat harvest in Southeast Alaska. Guideline harvest levels (GHL) are established for each area and are based on the allocation of points determined through aerial surveys (male goat= 1 point, female goat= 2 points) within each area. GHLs are established by allowing the harvest of 6 points per 100 adult goats seen during aerial surveys. Once the harvest has reached the GHL the hunt is closed by emergency order. The harvest of billies is encouraged to increase opportunity to other hunters and ensure the long term sustainability of the localized populations.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: Support. The author proposed these changes to provide increased goat hunting opportunity in areas of the Upper Chilkat River (western portions of RG023 and RG024). The proponent desires hunting opportunity during late season periods in areas where goat points are available but are rarely harvested within the current season dates. Unit 1D has three different goat hunts (RG023, RG024, and RG026), which are managed by small geographic hunt areas (21 total) to spread out unit-wide harvest. Season dates (listed above) vary by hunt and are in response to the effort for and accessibility of goats, especially off the road system. RG023 and RG024 hunt areas are broken down into 5 and 9 smaller geographic areas, respectively, with different GHLs within each hunt area. Expanding the hunt boundary for RG026 (season date Aug 1- Dec 31) to include 4 of the 14 hunt areas within RG023 and RG024, as mentioned above, would provide access via snowmachine later into the season.

The hunt area in the upper Takshanuk Range north and west of Goat Hollow was established in 2011 to provide additional hunting opportunity once the GHL was harvested in the middle portion of RG023, which is readily accessed from the Haines Highway. The Upper Takshanuk area has a GHL of 5 points (male goat= 1 point, female goat =2 points); no goats have been harvested from the area since its establishment. The hunt area between the Haines Highway and Nataga Creek has a GHL of 4 points for the last 6 years with an average of 1 point harvested. The hunt area including Tohitka and Raymond mountains has a GHL of 6 points and an average of 1 point has been harvested per year.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.



PROPOSAL 21- 5AAC 85.015

PROPOSED BY: Al Gilliam

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would separate the brown bear hunting season and black bear baiting season by shifting the black bear baiting season to June 1- June 15; this would result in shortening the season from 8 weeks to 2 weeks in Unit 1D.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

<u>Season</u>	<u>Bag Limit</u>
1 Sep–30 Jun	Resident hunters: 2 bears, not more than 1 of which may be a blue or glacier bear
1 Sep–30 Jun	Nonresident hunters: 1 bear

Bear Baiting season (Unit 1D): April 15- June 15

Same bag limits as above.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED?

Bait would not be out in the field until after the brown bear hunting season. The amount of time for black bear baiting would be reduced from 8 weeks to 2 weeks in Unit 1D.

BACKGROUND: For several years the overall mortality of brown bears in Unit 1D continued to increase to a high of 24 adult bears in 2010. A variety of sources contributed to the overall mortality including defense of life and property kills, vehicle collisions, and illegal take. In addition to the increasing mortality rumors were circulating that some of the bears were possibly being taken over black bear bait stations. Approximately two years ago the Department was made aware of the potential illegal harvest of brown bears over bait by guided hunters. After a multi-year international investigation, charges were filed against both guides and clients. Since the charges were filled and court action taken the Department has notice the unsustainably high harvest of brown bears, including female bears, start to decrease. When this proposal was brought to the Board in 2013 the Department discussed options to the Upper Lynn Canal Advisory Committee to shift the season, however, a petition with 84 names of Haines and Klukwan residents was received stating they wanted to season kept the same; the advisory committee ultimately decided not to pursue shifting the black bear baiting season.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: Neutral. During the last 10 years, an average of 32 black bears were harvested annually in Unit 1D, with approximately 37% of these taken over bait. On average, 18 people obtained a permit for bait sites each year, and a mean of 12 black bears were taken over bait. Sex ratios of bears harvested over bait are skewed towards males. For the years 2004-2013, 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 black bear bait stations being set up near brown bear hunting camps. The impacts of shortening the black bear baiting season from 8 weeks to 2 weeks is unknown. Based on dates of kill, 52% of the total Unit 1D black bear harvest between 2004-2013 is taken during the proposed period to close; 20% of all black bears were taken over bait during this period; and 56% of all baited black bears were taken during the period that the baiting season would be closed if the proposals is adopted.

The board has determined that the black bear population in Unit 1D supports customary and traditional subsistence uses. The board has set the Amounts Reasonably Necessary for Subsistence (ANS) at 10-20 black bears. 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.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 22 – 5 AAC 85.045. Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

PROPOSED BY: Yakutat Fish and Game Advisory Committee

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would shift the resident moose season to open 2 weeks earlier (August 15 – December 1) on the Malaspina Forelands (Unit 5B).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

Season and bag limits

Resident and nonresident hunters

Unit 5B

Sept 1–Dec 15

1 bull by registration permit

Only; up to 25 bulls

may be taken

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal would create a resident only moose season and open the season to resident hunters only on August 15 in Unit 5B. It may be necessary to create a new hunt to separate resident and nonresident hunters; the nonresident moose hunting season would remain unchanged (Sept 1-Dec 15).

BACKGROUND: Unit 5B consists mainly of the Malaspina Forelands, named for the Malaspina Glacier. It is believed moose colonized the area in late 1950s and the population peaked late in the 1960s. Moose densities are believed to be low. Available moose habitat is characterized as post-glacial climax vegetation and is limited to the eastern and western edges of the forelands, Yakutat Bay and Icy Bay, respectively. Much of Unit 5B is within the boundaries of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, and private lands owned by Chugach Alaska Corporation. Hunting is allowed in the park preserve (but only by people who live in resident zone communities or who can demonstrate a history of use of the park) and by permission on private land. Access to the area is by boat or aircraft only and is difficult due to weather and distance across Yakutat Bay. The current season dates were established partly to provide additional opportunity to unit residents, of whom many fish extensively in the summer and fall months. Unit 5A on the east side of Yakutat Bay has higher density moose numbers and has better access, and provides a Unit-resident federal subsistence hunt prior to the state hunt, all of which likely contribute to the low moose harvest in Unit 5B.

Surveys are difficult to achieve due to weather, snow conditions, and aircraft availability. Unit 5B was last surveyed in 2007 and 82 total moose (16% calves) were observed; herd composition data were not available due to the timing of the survey. Over the last ten years, 57 total bulls (mean=6 bulls/ year) have been harvested in Unit 5B. Approximately 38 people obtain registration permits (RM062) per year, and on average 20 people hunt, with a success rate of 30%. There has been no reported harvest from December 1 through the end of the season.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: **Oppose.** While this proposal has elements of allocation, the department does not believe increased take of moose is warranted at this time. The Department has little information about the Unit 5B moose population. Should this proposal be adopted, the RM062 moose hunt would open earlier than any moose hunt in Southeast Alaska, and before seasons in Unit 6, which makes up the remainder of the Gulf Coast moose hunt areas. There is potential for additional hunters to take advantage of the early season. More harvest in the early season would be additive as there is no harvest after December 1.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 23 – 5 AAC 85.045(1). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Reauthorize the antlerless moose season in Unit 1C.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

Season and bag limits

Unit 1(C), Berners Bay

Drainages:

1 moose by drawing permit only; up to 30 permits may be issued

Unit 1(C), that portion west of

Excursion Inlet and north of

Icy Passage:

1 moose per regulatory year, only as follows:

1 antlerless moose by drawing

permit only; up to 100 permits

may be issued

Resident and nonresident hunters

15 Sep–15 Oct

(General hunt only)

15 Sep–15 Oct

(General hunt only)

10 Nov–10 Dec

(General hunt only)

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The antlerless hunts in Unit 1C (Berners Bay and Gustavus) would be authorized for regulatory year 2015.

BACKGROUND: Staff proposal, See issue statement

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: Support.

Berners Bay

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 estimates (range: 116±25 to 131±36). The Juneau-Douglas Advisory Committee has annually voted to support the antlerless hunt. An aerial survey conducted in December 2013 resulted in a count of 73 moose (18 bulls, 47 cows, and 8 calves). Using sightability estimates based on radio-marked cow moose, we estimate the Berners Bay moose population to be approximately 90±13. In 2012 the population estimate was 113±11 moose. The 2012 and 2013 populations statistically overlap; we believe the population remained stable.

Five bull only drawing permits were offered for the fall 2014 hunting season; 4 of 5 permit holders harvested bull moose. The department intends to offer bull drawing permits for the fall 2015 season. An antlerless hunt will only be used when survey data and population estimates

suggest the herd is rapidly expanding, or that cow harvests can be sustained over time without being detrimental to the overall herd health. Annual aerial surveys will be conducted in Berners Bay to monitor the moose herds' status.

Gustavus

The Gustavus antlerless moose hunt has been closed since 2009, and will not be opened until the herd demonstrates a substantial increase and staff believes 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 December 2013 resulted in a count of 186 moose (25 bulls, 46 cows, 46 calves, and 75 unknown). Using sightability estimates based on radio-marked cow moose, the department currently estimates the Gustavus moose population at approximately 323±87; the 2012 estimate was 317±37. 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.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 24 – 5 AAC 85.045(3). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Reauthorize the antlerless moose season in Unit 5A, Nunatak Bench.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

(3)

	Resident	
	Open Season	
	(Subsistence and	Nonresident
Units and Bag Limits	General Hunts)	Open Season
Unit 5(A), that portion south of Wrangell - Saint Elias National Park,	Nov. 15 - Feb. 15	Nov. 15 - Feb. 15

north and east of
Russell and Nunatak
Fiords, and east of
the east side of East
Nunatak Glacier to
the Canadian Border
(Nunatak Bench)

1 moose by registration
permit only; up to 5
moose may be taken

...

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The antlerless hunting on Nunatak Bench in Unit 5A would be reauthorized for regulatory year 2015.

BACKGROUND: Staff proposal, See issue statement

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: Support. 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 demonstrates a substantial increase in number and at least 25 animals are counted during 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 and RM062).

The Nunatak Bench receives substantial snowfall each winter which severely limits the area where moose are able to forage. This limitation necessitates keeping moose on the limited habitat at low population 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.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 25 – 5 AAC 85.065. Hunting seasons and bag limits for small game.

PROPOSED BY: Yakutat Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Shift the resident duck season in Unit 5 two weeks earlier (August 15 – December 1).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

September 1- December 16 for both resident and nonresident hunters.

Bag limits vary by species and location.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal would create a resident only waterfowl hunting season in Unit 5, and would result in the earliest opening waterfowl season in the state.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: Take no action due to authority. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (MBTA) governs the establishment of waterfowl hunting season dates. The MBTA requires framework dates (the earliest and latest dates within which states may hold hunting seasons) to fall between September 1 and March 10. States can only select a season within these framework dates. Season length within framework dates, also governed by the MBTA, cannot exceed 107 days. States may be more restrictive than federal regulations but not more liberal; therefore, variable season lengths and dates are allowed only within the framework dates. This affects all 50 states equally.

While many other waterfowl regulations (e.g., daily bag limits) are set with input from the states through a cooperative process, dates for opening and closing seasons are set by international treaty and the MBTA and would require modification of the MBTA through international treaty negotiations to change.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 26 – 5 AAC 92.108. Identified big game prey populations and objectives.

PROPOSED BY: Greenpeace, Center for Biological Diversity, and The Boat Company.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO?

Revise downward the Intensive Management (IM) population and harvest objectives for deer in Units 1-5.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

Current IM population and harvest objectives for deer in Units 1-5 are as follows:

Unit	Finding	Population objective	Harvest objective
1A	Positive	15,000	700

1B	Negative		
1C	Positive	6,200	450
1D	Negative		
2	Positive	71,000	2,700
3	Positive	15,000	900
4	Positive	125,000	7,800
5	Negative		

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? IM

objectives for deer populations and harvests would be lowered, thereby reducing the levels at which IM actions would need to be contemplated to address harvestable numbers of deer in Southeast units.

BACKGROUND: As noted in the proposal, the department and the Board wrestled with establishing appropriate IM objectives for deer population and harvest levels in 2000. The densely-vegetated habitats of Southeast Alaska make it difficult to enumerate deer abundance and collecting accurate harvest data has been an ongoing challenge for the department.

At the time the IM objectives were established, the department and Board used deer harvest levels from that period as the basis for the agreed-upon IM harvest objectives, recognizing that harvest data have shown historical fluctuations and are largely influenced by winter weather conditions and associated deer mortality. In the absence of definitive population estimates for deer, the department and Board worked backwards from the harvest data and objectives to derive population objectives. There was an understanding at the time that the population objectives were uncertain at best, having been established in the absence of quantitative data.

Recognizing the shortcomings and limitations of both the population and harvest objectives, the Board felt they were as good as could be developed at the time. Subsequent to the establishment of IM objectives in 2000, the department estimated deer population trends throughout Southeast using long-established “traditional” pellet group transects. Data from these annual efforts continue to be used to assess annual fluctuations in populations, though they are not designed to derive changes in actual deer numbers.

Over time, the department recognized the growing importance of, and need for, better and more quantitative deer population size estimates, particularly when IM harvest objectives were not met in Units 1A and 3. Simultaneously, the department recognized the importance of understanding the status and condition of forest habitat to support deer. These needs became evident as the department developed Feasibility Assessments (FAs) and Operational Plans (OPs) for IM in Units 1A and 3.

As was included and outlined in the FAs and OPs, the department took steps to develop methods for estimating deer population numbers using fecal DNA from deer pellets. Research was conducted on northeast Chichagof Island and proved valuable for identifying strengths and limitations of the experimental approaches. Lessons learned through that research effort were used to improve the DNA technique, which was later applied during the springs of two consecutive years (2013 and 2014) in Unit 1A (Gravina Island) and Unit 3 (Mitkof and Kupreanof islands). Data from those efforts look promising for estimating deer numbers, though only in relatively small, isolated areas. Regardless, the utility of the approach appears promising.

Beyond the efforts to develop a practical technique for estimating deer numbers, the department has initiated efforts to assess habitat conditions in Units 1A and 3. This has included spring assessments of shrub (*Vaccinium* spp.) availability based on levels of abundance, condition, and use on Gravina Island in Unit 1A and Mitkof and Kupreanof islands in Unit 3, as well as availability of forbs on Mitkof and Kupreanof islands in Unit 3. Preliminary analyses of these data suggest that the availability of shrubs may be limiting winter deer habitat on Gravina Island. In Unit 3, on the other hand, levels of forbs and shrub abundance and availability suggest that the habitat may be capable of supporting additional deer beyond the numbers presently there.

In addition to the deer DNA and habitat work, the department has deployed remote trail cameras on Gravina Island in Unit 1A. Camera deployment has been done to test the ability to assess deer, bear, and wolf presence and abundance, with the hope of being able to apply the approach to other parts of Southeast, including Unit 3 where IM harvest objectives have not been met for several years.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: Neutral, however, the department does not have additional or new information to address revisions to the IM population objectives at this time.

Given continued uncertainty about deer population numbers throughout Southeast, and lacking quantitative data with which to improve IM objectives, the department recommends retaining the existing IM objectives at this time, with the understanding that further work will be done in the near future to help inform future adjustments.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 27 – 5 AAC 85.030. Hunting seasons and bag limits for deer.

PROPOSED BY: Ronald Leighton.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Allow for an early deer season in Units 1-5 for elderly and/or disabled hunters. Season dates would be June 15-July 31.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? See Table 27-1 below.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Persons 60 years and older or with debilitating disabilities could begin deer hunting June 15 in Units 1-5.

BACKGROUND: The proponent seeks easier harvest opportunities for disadvantaged hunters who cannot walk far for deer. The proponent states that deer are at lower elevations and are less skittish this time of year.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS:

Neutral. Deer populations and corresponding hunting regulations vary around the region. In some areas, such as Douglas Island in Unit 1C, Prince of Wales Island in Unit 2, and parts of Unit 4, deer populations are currently stable with liberal bag limits and season lengths. In these areas this proposal is more of an allocation issue than a conservation issue. In other parts of Southeast, deer populations are depressed and extended seasons would be unwarranted without

concurrent reductions in existing general seasons, which would again entail allocation. These areas include Unit 1A and 3 where we are currently not meeting intensive management objectives. Some areas in Southeast, such as units 1D (no open season) and Unit 5, have limited deer numbers and conservative seasons and bag limits. Additional harvests would not be appropriate in those areas.

The proposal if adopted as written would initiate a hunt that spans regulatory years, which complicates the issues of bag limit, harvest ticket requirements and reporting. In addition the board may want to consider concerns for meat care from animals harvested on early season hunts. High temperatures in June and July can cause rapid spoilage of meat if not quickly and properly cared for.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

 Table 27-1. Season dates and bag limits for deer, units 1–4.

Unit	Dates	Bag Limit	
1A Cleveland Peninsula	Aug 1-Nov 30	2 Bucks	
1A Remainder	Aug 1-Nov 30	4 Bucks	
1B	Aug 1- Dec 31	2 Bucks	
1C Douglas, Lincoln, Shelter, Sullivan Is.	Aug 1-Sept 14	Bucks	4 Total in 1C
1C Douglas, Lincoln, Shelter, Sullivan Is.	Sept 15-Dec 31	Deer	
1C Remainder	Aug 1- Dec 31	2 Bucks	
1D	no open season		
2	Aug 1-Dec 31	4 Bucks	
3 Mitkof Is., Petersburg Mgmt. Area	Oct 15-Dec 15	2 Bucks	Archery Only
Remainder Mitkof, Woewodski, Butterworth Is.	Oct 15-Oct. 31	1 Buck	
3 Portion of Lindenberg Peninsula	no open season		
3 Remainder	Aug 1-Nov 30	2 Bucks	
4 Portion of Chichagof Is.	Aug 1-Sept 14	Bucks	3 Total
4 Portion of Chichagof Is.	Sept 15-Dec 31	Deer	
4 Remainder	Aug 1-Sept 14	Bucks	4 Total

PROPOSAL 28 – 5 AAC 84.270. Trapping seasons and bag limits.

PROPOSED BY: Nick Yurko.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Lengthen the wolverine trapping season in Units 1-5 by ending the season on April 30; current trapping season end date is February 15.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

Units 1-5 Open Season: Nov. 10-Feb. 15 Limit: No Limit

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED?

This proposal would return wolverine trapping dates to those that were in effect before 2009 (November 10-April 30), and increase the number of female wolverines with young vulnerable to harvest.

BACKGROUND: Wolverine kits are born in February and early March and remain in the den until late May. During this late winter period reproducing females are vulnerable to trapping because they travel to find food in order to meet the energetic demands of lactation. In addition, pregnant females can be expected to regularly return to a den site, further increasing their vulnerability. Harvesting reproductive female wolverines during this period could have negative ramifications on future recruitment into the population and subsequent harvest levels.

The wolverine trapping season was changed from an ending date of April 30 in 2008. This reduction in season length did not cause a reduction in total harvest. In fact, harvest has exhibited an increasing trend since the season was shortened suggesting that the strategy to protect pregnant females is having a positive effect on harvest.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: Oppose. Closing the wolverine trapping dates on February 15 is intended to provide sustainable wolverine hunting and trapping opportunities and makes the closing date for wolverine trapping consistent with most furbearers across the region.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 29 – 5 AAC 92.095. Unlawful methods of trapping furbearers; exceptions.

PROPOSED BY: Anne Robbins-Shuder.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would require trappers to check traps at specified intervals after being set (3-5 days) in Units 1-5.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Mandatory trap checks are required in the Gustavus area (Unit 1C) only:

5 AAC 92.095 Unlawful methods of taking furbearers; exceptions.

- (a)(16) in Unit 1C, that portion west of Excursion Inlet and north of Icy Passage, by using
- (A) A snare with a cable diameter of 1/32 inch or larger that is set out of water, except under the terms of a registration permit;
 - (B) A trap or snare, unless the trap or snare is checked at least once every 72 hours;

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal would require trappers to check traps after a specified interval. With the exception of the Gustavus area, this would be a significant change for current practices throughout the region where traps are not required to be checked. Much of the land area in Southeast Alaska is federally managed and there is subsistence trapper harvest on those lands. Federal subsistence trapping regulations do not require mandatory trap checks; adoption of this proposal would affect only trappers residing in non-rural areas on non-federally managed lands.

BACKGROUND: The amount of time trappers spend trapping in Southeast was estimated to be approximately 9 weeks in 2012; there are no data for the number of days between trap checks.

Weather can limit access to traps and affect fur quality. Unlike northern areas of the state, winter temperatures in Southeast fluctuate widely and furbearers in traps may not freeze which can lead to fur loss if the animal is not recovered quickly. Many Southeast trappers use boats to access trapping areas and strong winter storms can make boating hazardous. Freezing temperatures can make accessing bays and estuaries impossible due to ice. Both of these factors can result in the degradation or loss of fur. However, these same factors can also create situations where a trapper could be in violation of a trap check regulation due to safety concerns.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: Neutral. There are no conservation concerns. Should the Board adopt this proposal, the department recommends that snares be included.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 30 – 5 AAC 92.044. Permit for hunting black bear with the use of bait or scent lures.

PROPOSED BY: Michael Ashton.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Remove the requirements to provide GPS coordinates to register for bear bait stations in Units 1-5.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? In Units 1-5, before a person establishes black bear baiting station and places bait at the baiting station, that person shall, at the time of registration, provide the Department the location, in a global positioning system (GPS) format, of the latitude and longitude of the baiting station on a form provided by the Department.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Black bear baiters would no longer be required to provide the Department with GPS coordinates of their black bear bait stations.

BACKGROUND: This regulation was established four years ago (November 2010 board meeting) at the request of the Alaska Wildlife Troopers (AWT) in order to more efficiently check black bear bait stations in the field.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: **Neutral.** The Department has had conservation concerns for black bears for several years. Drawing hunts for black bears in Units 1-3 were also adopted by the board at the November 2010 meeting. Wildlife enforcement is an important conservation tool. Requiring GPS coordinates for black bear bait stations has allowed for more efficient checks of bait stations by both Alaska Wildlife Troopers and ADF&G personnel. It is possible that elimination of the GPS requirement may require a subsequent reduction in season length or bag limits.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 31 – 5 AAC 92.130. Restrictions to bag limit.

PROPOSED BY: John Frost.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal either eliminates the regulation requiring bear (black bear and brown bear) hunters to count wounded bears towards their bag limit; or would add language to the regulation further defining “wounded” in Units 1-5.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? As stated in 5 AAC 92.130(f), in Units 1-5 and Unit 8, a black or brown bear wounded by a person counts against that person’s bag limit for the regulatory year in which the bear is taken. However, in Units 1-5 and Unit 8, a brown bear wounded by a person does not count against that person’s one bear every four regulatory years bag limit established in 5 AAC 92.132.

As stated in 5 AAC 92.130(h), “wounded” means there is a sign of blood or there is sign that the animals has been hit by a hunting projectile.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Only mortally wounded bears would count toward a hunter’s bag limit or no wounded bears would count toward the bag limit.

BACKGROUND: The intent of the current regulation is to avoid the additive harvest of bears that may be caused by hunters either continuing to hunt, or taking additional bears, after they have wounded a bear. Previously the Board defined “wounded” to provide a benchmark from which a judgment could be made concerning whether or not a bear had been hit by a projectile by all parties involved in the taking of a bear.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: Oppose. Through hunt reports and conversations with hunters and guides the current regulation appears to be useful in reducing the number of bears taken that could otherwise have been in addition to those considered wounded. While not common, on occasion bears are reported as wounded on harvest ticket and permit report cards and this information provides some insight to the extent of wounding loss on bears to managers, which is factored into management strategies.

The concerns outlined by the author of the proposal are largely ethical and enforcement considerations. At all times the department encourages hunters who have wounded game to make every attempt to recover the animal. If a bear is not recovered in the same regulatory year as it was wounded a hunter has a new bag limit, as provided by in 5 AAC 85.015 and 5 AAC 92.130(h), the following regulatory year. . Hunting guide regulations and guiding concerns are managed and administered through the Big Game Commercial Services Board under the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional cost to or the department.

PROPOSAL 32 – 5 AAC 92.010. Harvest tickets and reports.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Professional Hunters Association (APHA).

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would allow resident black bear hunters to transfer one of two resident black bear harvest tickets to a nonresident relative, within second degree of kindred, in Units 1-3; and would require the resident hunter to accompany the nonresident hunter in the field to hunt black bears.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Under 5 AAC 92.010(1), a person may not hunt black bear in Units 1-7, 11-16, 19D, and 20, except when a permit is required , unless the person has in possession a harvest ticket for the species and has obtained a harvest report (issued with the harvest ticket).

5 AAC 015 Hunting Seasons and Bag Limits for black bear.

Units 1-3	Season: Sept. 1-June 30	Resident Bag Limit: 2 bears,	Nonresident
Bag Limit: 1 bear			

Not more than 1 of which may be a blue or glacier Bear	Nonresident hunters with guide: 1 bear Nonresident hunters without guide: 1 bear by drawing permit only*
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*Available permit numbers vary by Unit, Subunit and season.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal provides an additional opportunity, beyond the nonresident black bear drawing permits, for nonresidents to hunt black bears in Units 1-3.

BACKGROUND: In response to increasing black bear harvest numbers in Southeast Alaska and concerns with the sustainability of the harvest, in fall 2010, the Board adopted regulations requiring unguided nonresident black bear hunters to possess a black bear drawing permit, which

allows the department to control the number of bears taken by these hunters. In addition, nonresident black bear hunters hunting with a guide were not required to possess a drawing permit. Drawing permits were required beginning July 1, 2012.

Drawing permits were first required in 2012. Along with this requirement multiple other considerations involving guided nonresident black bear hunters and a 3-year black bear harvest management strategy began. Presently, the department is in the final half of the last year of the 3-year management strategy. In order to best assess the effectiveness of the drawing permit and guiding requirements, consideration should be given to allowing the first 3-year period to reach completion before changing present nonresident black bear hunting requirements.

As noted above, nonresident black bear drawing permits are largely under-subscribed, meaning permits are often available for issue over-the-counter. Because permits are available, opportunity is largely provided to nonresidents wishing to hunt black bears without a guide. It is likely the department will have a proposal(s) relaxing nonresident black bear drawing permit requirements for portions of Southeast Alaska (Units 1A, 1B, 1C and 1D) at a future Board meeting after the three years' (2012-2014) of data is analyzed.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: Neutral. The intent of the regulation passed by the Board in 2010 has largely been met. The black bear harvest has been reduced or stabilized in Unit 1-3, and with the exception of Unit 2 (Prince of Wales Island) and a portion of Unit 3 (Kuiu and Kupreanof islands) drawing permits are largely undersubscribed. Non-residents that did not apply for a drawing permit wishing to hunt with relatives can currently obtain under-subscribed permits at ADF&G offices.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal may result in additional cost to the department due to administer and manage the transfer of resident black bear harvest tickets.

PROPOSAL 33 – 5 AAC 92.080. Unlawful taking of game; exceptions.

PROPOSED BY: Jake Sprankle.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would allow the use of felt soled waders and wading boots in Units 1-5.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? On or after January 1, 2013, with the use of footgear with soles of felt, or other absorbent fiber material, is prohibited while wading in freshwater streams in this state.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Felt soled waders would be legal for wading in streams while hunting.

BACKGROUND: In 2012, the Board adopted regulations prohibiting the use of felt soled waders and wading boots to emulate regulations adopted by the Alaska Board of Fisheries in 2009. The prohibition on the use of felt soled wader and wading boots is an effort to reduce or prevent the introduction of invasive species and diseases to freshwater bodies in Alaska.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: Oppose. This is a statewide regulation. The relationship between Alaska's freshwater systems, fish, and wildlife is extensive and well documented. Negative impacts from invasive species and/or disease to freshwater systems will ultimately

impact wildlife species in some manner. Adoption of this proposal may create confusion with fishers and hunters since prohibitions on felt soles will differ. If the board desires to remove the prohibition on felt soles, the department requests that it be lifted statewide.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 34 – 5 AAC 92.010 Harvest tickets and reports.

PROPOSED BY: Sea Ducks Unlimited.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would require the state to implement a mandatory reporting system (electronic and/or mail) for the harvest of migratory game birds, by species, in Units 1-5.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Although no state codified definition exists, migratory game birds in Alaska are considered to be all waterfowl, as well as cranes and snipe.

- 1) **AS 16.05.340(17)(A).** Waterfowl conservation tag. A person may not engage in waterfowl hunting without having the current year’s waterfowl tag in the person’s actual possession, unless that person (i) qualifies for a \$5 license fee under (6) of this subsection; (ii) is a resident under the age of 16; (iii) is 60 years of age or older and is a resident; (iv) is a disabled veteran eligible for a free Alaska hunting license under AS 16.05.341.
- 2) **5 AAC 92.018.** Waterfowl conservation tag. A person required to possess an Alaska waterfowl conservation tag or “stamp” under AS16.05.340(17)(A) shall
 - (1) Register in the Migratory Bird Harvest Information Program and carry proof of the registration while hunting migratory birds; and...
- 3) State and federal stamps are not required when hunting only **snipe** and **cranes**, thus snipe and crane hunters need **not** be enrolled in the Migratory Bird Harvest Information Program.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If adopted this proposal would require the state to develop, implement, and enforce a mandatory reporting system (electronic and/or mail) for the harvest of migratory game birds, by species, in Units 1-5. Hunters would be required to record and report all harvested migratory game birds, by species, or forfeit migratory game bird hunting privileges the following year.

BACKGROUND: Methods for estimating migratory game bird harvest and species composition have varied since early attempts by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) beginning in 1952. Many states also have long histories of conducting their own harvest surveys, including Alaska.

The State of Alaska conducted waterfowl harvest surveys from 1971–1997 using several methods. From 1971 - 1976 federal duck stamp data, a state mail questionnaire sent to all licensed hunters in Alaska, and limited hunter bag checks were used to estimate harvest. In 1982, sampling by mail was improved and hunter bag checks discontinued. Sampling was

further improved in 1987, when mail-in questionnaires were assigned to purchasers of state duck stamps, thus focusing the state survey on waterfowl hunters (eliminating the need to sample all Alaskan-licensed hunters), and improving collection of harvest location data. From 1988–1992, additional refinements were made to the survey.

The national Harvest Information Program (HIP) (50 CFR Part 20 § 20.20) was implemented in all states beginning with the 1998-99 migratory bird season and supplemented other state harvest efforts. HIP was developed in recognition of long-standing problems with traditional state and federal surveys to assess nationwide harvest of migratory game birds, including inadequate sampling of migratory bird hunters; lack of information on non-waterfowl species (e.g., snipe, sandhill cranes, doves); lack of information on less frequently hunted species (e.g., sea ducks, brant); poor accuracy of harvest estimates; and differing survey methods among states, preventing consolidated flyway and national harvest estimates.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: Oppose. Statewide harvest estimates and species composition for migratory game birds are being provided to the state by the federal HIP (harvest estimates) and Parts Collection Survey (species composition), as well as by other department surveys. With some exceptions (see **AS 16.05.340(17)(A)** and **5 AAC 92.018**, above), all persons that hunt waterfowl in Alaska are required to buy an Alaska Waterfowl Conservation Tag (i.e., duck stamp). Hunters that buy a duck stamp are automatically enrolled in the HIP program. Harvest estimates for cranes and snipe are generated from surveys of waterfowl hunters. The HIP registration requirements include obtaining information on: (a) identity of migratory bird hunters by name, address, and date of birth; and (b) their previous-year activity and level of harvest for categories of migratory birds (e.g., ducks, geese, brant, sea ducks cranes, snipe). Registration data gathered by the states are used by USFWS to conduct a stratified harvest survey from a sample of hunters to produce harvest estimates for migratory bird groups.

To implement a mandatory statewide harvest survey for migratory game birds would be redundant, costly, and unnecessary while the HIP program and other survey efforts are in place

The HIP survey generates the best harvest estimates at the state level, and lacks resolution for less commonly hunted species (sea ducks, cranes). Generally this is not critical as the state manages waterfowl hunting on a large geographic scale (zones), and migratory bird regulations are primarily designed to address population level goals over broad geographic areas, which is generally well-served by HIP. Granted, with the implementation of HIP, good harvest estimates for migratory birds in Alaska are generally unavailable at the regional and local level for many species. At times this has affected the Department’s ability to address board proposals to regulate localized harvest of sea ducks. However, there are cases where the state has implemented mandatory reporting for local harvest data collection. These include the Mendenhall Wetlands State Game Refuge registration permit (WU001), and Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge registration permit (WU002). As necessary, the department or public is able to request more specific harvest reporting requirements through the board.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal would result in additional cost to the department for the development, annual printing, and administration of migratory bird harvest tickets and reports.

PROPOSAL 35 – 5 AAC 92.003. Hunter education and orientation requirements.

PROPOSED BY: John Frost.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would require the development and implementation of a crossbow hunter education program and certification.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There are currently no regulations requiring crossbow hunter education. Crossbows may be used in unrestricted weapons hunts throughout the State of Alaska as long as they meet the following requirements (5 AAC 92.085 Unlawful methods of taking big game; exceptions):

(15) [allowed] with a crossbow, unless the

- (A) bow peak draw weight is 100 pounds or more;
- (B) bow has a minimum draw length of 14 inches from front of bow to back of string when in the cocked position;
- (C) bolt is tipped with a broadhead and is a minimum of 16 inches in overall length and weighs at least 300 grains; and
- (D) Crossbow has no attached electronic devices, except for a scope or electronic sight hat does not project light externally;

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED?

This proposal would require current and future crossbow hunters to successfully complete a crossbow hunter education course prior to hunting with a crossbow. In addition, adoption of this proposal would require the Department to develop and implement a new hunter education course.

BACKGROUND: There is an increasing interest in using crossbows for hunting in Alaska. As described above, currently there are no education and certification requirements for crossbow hunters, with the exception of applicants who have applied for a methods and means exemption and who wish to use crossbows in archery only hunts. In these situations, the department currently requires applicants to complete the , crossbow-specific workbook in the department’s online archery education course (“Today’s Crossbow”), and to pass a proficiency shoot with a crossbow. As noted by the proposal author, crossbows are not traditional bow and arrow gear: there are equipment-specific safety concerns, functions, and shooting techniques. Due to the increasing interest in the use of crossbows in the state and the differences from education programs for other hunting implements (e.g., firearms and archery) the development of a crossbow hunter education program and certificate may be warranted.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: Oppose. This is a statewide regulation and it would better implemented on a statewide basis. This proposal has also been submitted for the Region II and Region IV board meetings. Should the board wish to adopt this proposal the department recommends statewide implementation. The board may wish to consider deferring the proposal until the next statewide board meeting (Cycle “B” in 2016). Should this proposal be adopted the department recommends that implementation be postponed order to develop the education program , train HIT staff and volunteers, and offer courses for interested hunters prior to the effective date of the regulation.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal will result in additional costs to hunters who wish to hunt with a crossbow, and to the Department in the form of HIT staff and volunteer training, and travel to deliver field day courses. The company the Department currently contracts with to deliver and support online hunter education courses does not currently charge for the development of a new course, customer support, or student data sharing with the Department. The student fee is estimated to be \$30.

PROPOSAL 36 – 5 AAC 92.044. Permit for hunting bear with the use of bait or scent lures.

PROPOSED BY: John Frost.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Eliminate the requirement for hunters to remove all contaminated soil from a black bear bait site at the conclusion of the baiting season.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

5 AAC 92.044 (b)(10) a permittee must remove bait, litter, and equipment from the bait station site when hunting is complete.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED?

Contaminated vegetation, duff or soil would not need to be removed from a bait site.

BACKGROUND: The requirement to remove all soil contaminated by baiting at the end of the season is considered to be an excessive nuisance and a form of harassment by regulators to some members of the bear baiting community.

Grease poured onto the ground and spread at bear bait sites constitutes “bait” by definition. Bear baiting has strict regulations to ensure public safety and to ensure that bait stations do not continue to attract bears beyond the period when baiting is permitted. Contaminated soil can continue to serve as an attractant to bears after the season, thus falling under the legal definition of bait which must be removed from the site. Use of grease at a bait site can also kill vegetation and create unsightly “grease pits.” The use of grease is legal as long as it is biodegradable; however, its use is discouraged by the Department.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: **Oppose.** The requirement to clean up contaminated soil is intended to discourage the use of grease, and is a tool to ensure bears stop using closed bait stations. It is also a statewide regulation and should be addressed on a statewide basis.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 37 – 5 AAC 85.XXX seasons and bag limits.

PROPOSED BY: Kevin Secor.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal suggests two allocation changes to current hunt management strategies. First, resident hunters would be allowed to hunt five additional days more than nonresident hunters in general season hunts (e.g., general season deer hunts) either in the beginning or ending of the hunt; and second, would allocate 75% of all

Southeast Alaska drawing permits to state residents (drawing permits are not currently allocated to any one hunter demographic group).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

There are no state regulations for Southeast Alaska authorizing additional hunt days for resident hunters outside the current season dates established for general season hunts.

Under federal subsistence hunting regulations, federally qualified hunters may hunt deer in multiple locations in Southeast Alaska outside State of Alaska seasons.

There are no current regulations allocating drawing permits to any demographic hunter group in Southeast Alaska. The Alaska Board of Game *Nonresident Drawing Permit Allocation Policy*, #2006-162-BOG, includes the following: “Allocations will be determined on a case by case basis and will be based upon the historical data of nonresident and resident permit allocation over the past ten years.”

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If adopted as written this proposal would lengthen resident deer and black bear hunting seasons, and would have little effect on drawing permit allocation in Southeast Alaska because resident hunters already receive the majority of available drawing permits.

BACKGROUND: In Southeast Alaska black bear and Sitka black-tailed deer are the two big game species managed by general season harvest tickets; nonresident black bear hunters are required to use drawing permits in Unit 1-3. Federally qualified hunters may take additional deer and hunt either before or after the state season closes, as specified in federal subsistence hunting regulations. Both species have long hunting seasons and multiple animal bag limits which provide extensive hunting opportunity in the region. Season dates were established for a variety of reasons, including natal care, rutting times, visibility (i.e., presence or absence of dense brush), and availability (i.e., salmon streams for bears and beaches for deer). Additional hunt days for resident hunters may require reductions in other seasons to maintain sustainable harvest levels. Recent analysis of black bear harvests suggests the current harvest level is sustainable throughout the region. Deer harvests are a concern in some areas of Southeast (e.g., Units 1A and 2) and additional harvest is not advised.

A total of ten (mountain goat, elk, and moose) drawing permit hunts were available to resident and nonresident hunters during the period 2004-2013 resulting in a total of 1,542 permits being issued; residents received 97% of the available permits. Also, 77% of nonresident drawing permit holders received elk permits (DE318, DE 321-DE323) and 23% received mountain goat permits (DG003, DG005, DG006). Likely the number of drawing permit applications received for hunts in Southeast Alaska from residents outnumbers those received from nonresident hunters for a variety of reasons. Residents often have local knowledge, equipment, and fewer time restrictions to participate in drawing hunts than nonresidents. While there are drawing hunt opportunities in the region, most big game hunts are managed by registration permits, which do not require participation in the lottery system and are readily available over the counter or online through the Department’s website. For example, there is one drawing moose hunt available to both resident and nonresident hunters in Southeast Alaska and nine registration permit hunts for hunters to choose from. Because of their availability and distribution across the region, registration hunts may be more attractive to nonresident hunters.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: Neutral. Currently there are few drawing permit hunts in Southeast Alaska, excluding nonresident black bear drawing permits where resident hunters are not impacted and continue to harvest bears under a general season hunt. The majority of big game hunts are managed by registration permit. As noted above resident hunters receive the overwhelming majority of drawing permits available in Southeast, and at present there does not appear to be an issue with the allocation of permits from the current random lottery system used by the state. This proposal has also been submitted to the Region II and Region IV board meetings.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional cost to the department.

PROPOSAL 38 – 5 AAC 85.Seasons and bag limits.

PROPOSED BY: Douglas Malone.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would allocate 90% of all Southeast Alaska drawing permits to state residents, whereas drawing permits are currently not allocated to any one hunter demographic group.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There are no current regulations allocating drawing permits to any demographic hunter group in Southeast Alaska. The Alaska Board of Game *Nonresident Drawing permit Allocation Policy*, #2006-162-BOG, includes the following: “Allocations will be determined on a case by case basis and will be based upon the historical data of nonresident and resident permit allocation over the past ten years.”

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal would have little effect in Southeast Alaska because resident hunters already receive the majority of available drawing permits.

BACKGROUND: The Department relies on a drawing process that randomly selects permit winners. Applicants may apply individually or in a party of two. Applications are accepted in November and December of each year and are screened to ensure the necessary information is provided and hunters are eligible to apply for drawing hunts. In February, permit winners are selected and notified. Permit winners receive permits beginning in July of the regulatory year.

A total of ten (mountain goat, elk, and moose) drawing permit hunts were available to resident and nonresident hunters during the period 2004-2013, resulting in a total of 1,542 permits being issued; residents received 97% of the available permits. Also, 77% of nonresident drawing permit holders received elk permits (DE318, DE 321-DE323) and 23% received mountain goat permits (DG003, DG005, DG006). Likely the number of drawing permit applications received for hunts in Southeast Alaska from residents outnumbers those received from nonresident hunters for a variety of reasons. Residents often have local knowledge, equipment, and fewer time restrictions to participate in drawing hunts than nonresidents. While there are drawing hunt opportunities in the region, most big game hunts are managed by registration permits, which do not require participation in the lottery system and are readily available over the counter or online through the Department’s website. For example, there is one drawing moose hunt available to both resident and nonresident hunters in Southeast Alaska and nine registration permit hunts for

hunters to choose from. Because of their availability and distribution across the region, registration hunts may be more attractive to nonresident hunters.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: Neutral. Currently there are few drawing permit hunts in Southeast Alaska, excluding nonresident black bear drawing permits where resident hunters are not impacted and continue to harvest bears under a general season hunt. The majority of big game hunts are managed by registration permit. As noted above resident hunters receive the overwhelming majority of drawing permits available in Southeast, and at present there does not appear to be an issue with the allocation of permits from the current random lottery system used by the state. This proposal has also been submitted to the Region II and Region IV board meetings.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional cost to the department.
