

GREATER ALASKA BLACK BEAR HUNTING ISSUES RC 70

(Revised Group Decisions)

1. Harvest Tickets and Sealing
 - a. Should harvest tickets and sealing requirements be standardized?
 - i. **Consensus** - a harvest report card (without harvest tickets) must be filled out if you hunt black bear anywhere in Greater Alaska.
 1. Sealing requirements will be dictated by the need for Biological information, and set by ADF&G.
2. Black Bear Hunting Seasons
 - a. Should seasons be standardized?
 - i. Most seasons in Greater Alaska are open year-round
 - ii. Seasons in Units 6A&B, 17 are shorter for unknown reasons
 1. **Consensus** - SHOULD BE STANDARDIZED TO YEAR-ROUND.
 - i. The season in 6C&D is shorter due to a potential for high harvest
 - ii. Season in 14C are shorter due to perceived conflict concerns
 1. **Consensus** - All seasons in 14 C should be aligned to Day After Labor Day - June 15 and the registration tag eliminated.
3. Black Bear Bait Seasons
 - a. Should baiting seasons be standardized?
 - i. Most spring baiting seasons are April 15-June 30
 1. **Consensus** - All spring bait seasons in Greater Alaska April 1 - June 30 (where bear seasons are open)
 - a. Interior bait hunters have asked for an earlier opener to allow for snowmobile access before breakup.
 - a. Unit 6 has shorter spring bear hunting seasons
 - b. Fall seasons vary widely
 - i. Should fall season be standardized?
 1. **Consensus** - All fall seasons (where fall seasons exist) August 1 - October 15
4. Salvage Requirements
 - a. Should salvage requirements be standardized?
 - i. **Consensus** - Salvage should be standardized statewide.
 1. **Consensus** - Hide and meat must be salvaged January 1- May 31.
 2. **Consensus** - Hide OR Meat must be salvaged June 1 - December 31.
 3. **Consensus** - Skull salvage requirements will be dictated by the need for Biological information, and set by ADF&G.
 - b. Should evidence of sex attached be required?
 - i. **Consensus** - Evidence of sex must remain attached only in areas where sealing is required.

GREATER ALASKA BLACK BEAR HUNTING ISSUES (Revised Group Decisions)

5. Bait Hunting the day of flying
 - a. Should hunting at bait sites after flying be allowed?
 - i. **Consensus** - Hunting over bait should be allowed statewide immediately after flying.
 1. The hunter must be 300 feet from the plane
 2. Must hunt at a registered bait site only
6. IBEP required to hunt over bait with archery
 - a. Should IBEP training be required to hunt with bait?
 - i. **Consensus** - IBEP should not be required to hunt bears over bait anywhere.
 1. **Discussion:**
 - a. black bear baiting is the most controlled situation in big game hunting.
 - b. IBEP should either be required for all archery hunting of bears or none.
 - c. Bait hunting should not be singled out
 - d. IBEP should be required for all archery hunting, if required for bear baiting.
7. Guide Regulations
 - a. Should the number of baits guides are allowed be standardized?
 - i. **Consensus** - Guides may have 10 baits in all of Greater Alaska (units 6-26) as already regulation in regions 2-4
 1. Area biologists may restrict guides from specific locations to avoid conflicts with established bait sites.
 - b. Should guides be required to personally accompany clients in the stand?
 1. **Consensus** - strike 92.044 (b)(6) "a person may not give remuneration for the use of a bait station, including barter or exchange of goods; however this paragraph does not apply to a licensed guide who personally accompanies a client at a bait site."
 - a. This is already covered under BGCSB (Big Game Commercial Services Board) guide regulations and statutes and is redundant.
 - b. The BGCSB defines accompanied as within 100 yards at the time an animal is taken.
 - c. This is the only BOG regulation that dictates how a guide must treat a hunter in the field.
8. Bait station registration and use
 - a. Should bait station registration requirements be standardized?
 - i. **Consensus** - bait stations registration and use should be simplified and standardized.

GREATER ALASKA BLACK BEAR HUNTING ISSUES RC 70

(Revised Group Decisions)

1. Require a physical description to register a bait site that may be either a written description **OR** a GPS coordinate.
2. Issue a brightly colored, numbered metal locking tag that must be hung at a bait station in a prominent location. Additional signage is optional.
3. Other hunters may use and maintain a registered station with written permission, carried in the field, to include:
 - a. Name of user and permittee
 - b. Date of permission granted
 - c. Bait station number(s) located on the metal locking tag
 - d. Both parties hunting license numbers

9. Black bear bag limits

- a. Should black bear bag limits be standardized?
 - i. **Consensus** - Black bear bag limits should be standardized to **3 bears** in units 6-26.
 1. Unit 6D bag limit should remain one bear.
 2. Areas with predation problems or over abundant black bears should be highlighted by limits of 5 or more.
 3. Increased black bear bag limits have not shown to increase harvest in most cases but can provide a limited opportunity for some hunters.

10. Predator Control

- a. Should ordinary baiting be allowed in predator control areas?
 - i. **Consensus** - Ordinary baiting should be allowed in all predator control areas with a traditional bear bait permit for both residents and non-residents.
 1. Currently, residents may only register a bait site with a control permit
 - a. This keeps them from allowing anyone (resident or not) to hunt their site without also getting a control permit
 - b. This keeps young resident children from hunting with their parents over bait (under 10yoa in unit 16, under 16yoa in unit 19D)
- b. Should black bear baiting be considered a control method at all?
 - i. **Consensus** - Black bear baiting should **NOT** be considered a method for predator control. Predator control permits should be issued for extraordinary circumstances, bear baiting is not an extraordinary circumstance.
 1. Black bear baiting is a widely accepted method of hunting in Alaska and may be tarnished if labeled "predator control" in some areas.
 2. Predator control permits should be issued only for the purposes of **snaring over bait** and the taking of **sows with cubs of the year and cubs of the year.**
 3. There should be a "default" bag limit, under normal hunting regulations of **"NO LIMIT"** within black bear control areas.

GREATER ALASKA BLACK BEAR HUNTING ISSUES (Revised Group Decisions)

4. In all other cases "Predator Control" labels and permits are reserved for exceptional methods and means (airborne hunting, bear snaring, brown bear baiting, etc.)

11. Non-Consensus Items

- a. Black Bear Baiting Clinic Requirements.
 - i. Statewide requirement was discussed now that they are available online.
 - ii. Eliminating any Clinic was discussed.
- b. Default Black bear bag limit of "no limit".
 - i. Very few people harvest more than one bear much less three (less than 1% harvest three) so it would not make an impact on populations.
 - ii. Few people would take advantage of it so is it worth the effort?
 - iii. May send a bad message to the public.
- c. Should outfitted bait hunts be allowed?
 - i. BOG does not have the authority to allow for outfitted hunts as BGCSB regulations prohibit the practice at this point.
- d. Unit 6D seasons and bag limits.
 - i. Some participants believe the proper restrictions are in place now.
 - ii. Some participants believe restrictions we made with little scientific data.
 - iii. Some participants were concerned that restrictions were made due to potential conflicts with other users.

Agency Participants: Tony Kavalok (ADF&G), Cliff Judkins (BOG), Lew Bradley (BOG), Nate Turner (BOG)

Group participants: Joe Schuester (Anchorage, user in units 16,17, 19, 21, 24), Phil Lincoln (Anchorage AC, user in units 7,15,6,14), Aaron Bloomquist (Tok, user in units 16,11,13,12,6), Vince Holton (Fairbanks/Nenana user in unit 20, 13), Al Barrette (Fairbanks AC user in unit 20, 13), Mike Crawford (Kenai AC, 6,7,15).

RC 71

January 16, 2012

From: Greg Roczicka, on behalf of ONC & Lower Kuskokwim area

Request that in deliberation of Proposal #128, the Board would add consideration for the following regulatory change:

5AAC 92.210. Game as animal food or bait. A person may not use game as food for a dog or furbearer, or as bait, except for the following:

(7) game that died of natural causes, if the game is not moved from the location where it was found, unless approved in advance by the Department through 5AAC 92.051 after request by a trapper that identifies a specific time and location; for the purposes of this paragraph, "natural causes" does not include death caused by a human.

We were unaware that this requested action was inadvertently left out of the packet of proposals from the Lower Kuskokwim AC and others sent from our region until the proposal booklet was made available to the public. A companion proposal was submitted to the federal subsistence board, but was returned with a notice from them that they had no jurisdiction in this area.

PROPOSAL 35C -5 AAC 92.125. Intensive management plan. Authorizes an intensive management plan for moose in Unit 15A

(x) **Unit 15A Wolf Predation Control Area.** Notwithstanding any other provisions in this title, and based on the following information contained in this section, the commissioner or the commissioner's designee may conduct a wolf population reduction or wolf population regulation program in Unit 15(A):

- 1) the Unit 15A Predation Control Area is established and consists of all lands within Unit 15(A) (1314 square miles), non federal lands identified for intensive management are approximately 83 square miles;
- 2) the Intensive Management population and harvest objectives for moose in Unit 15(A) are 3000-3500 and 180-350, respectively; the sustained yield of moose is currently below objectives; the goal is to reduce calf and adult mortality for reallocation of moose from wolves to harvest; a November 2011 survey estimated 60-62 wolves in Unit 15(A); wolf control objectives are to remove wolves from the population through trapping, hunting, and wolf control activities and retain at least 15 wolves in Unit 15A; wolf surveys will be conducted as necessary to ensure that the population contains at least 15 wolves;
- 3) the discussion of wildlife populations and human use information is as follows:
 - a) the moose population and harvest information in Unit 15(A) is as follows:
 - i) the moose population size was estimated in 2008 at 2088 moose (95% confidence interval=264);The moose population is below intensive management objectives.
 - ii) the average yearly harvest during the past decade (2001-2010) has been 140 moose; this is a lower harvest compared to the previous decade (1991-2000) where the average yearly harvest was 194 moose; the entire area is a non-subsistence use area so there is no Amount Reasonably Necessary for Subsistence Use (5AAC 99.025 (8)) for 15A;
 - b) declining habitat quality is the main limiting factor affecting low moose densities in Unit 15(A); there has not been a fire of significant size in the unit for over 40 years; studies from 1987-1992 showed 96% of cows aged 2-15 were pregnant whereas 73% of cows in the same age group were pregnant in 2006; twinning rates calculated in 1983 in an area that burned in 1969 showed a 72% twinning rate whereas twinning rates calculated in the unit for 2011 were at 16%; the moose population appeared to be at or above carrying capacity in the early 1990s and declined at a rate of 9% per year during the 1990s; research on calf mortality in the late 1970s in the unit showed 48% of calves dying from predation, 6% was caused by wolves, 6% was caused by brown bears, 34% was caused by black bears, and 2% undetermined predation from wolves or bears prior to July 15th; while habitat is limiting, wolf predation has been shown to limit calf and adult moose survival in the unit; predation rates by these three primary predators may have changed due to changes in prey availability however, all three predator species are still relatively abundant in the unit; over the last decade highway vehicle collisions (41% cows, 51%

- calves, average 85 per year) represented approximately 38% of human caused mortality of moose in the unit;
- c) with limited habitat this action is not intended to make significant progress toward the IM population objective, rather reducing predation will allow for possible reallocation of moose from predators to harvest; the program will initially focus on wolves due to potential effectiveness of aerial wolf control; additional black bear take will be considered if additional improvements in calf survival and recruitment are needed to meet harvest objectives; ;
 - d) the wolf harvest over the past decade in Unit 15(A) has ranged between 4–16 wolves taken each year with a mean of 11 wolves; the pre-winter wolf population was estimated at 60–62 wolves in November 2011; the harvest has been inadequate to reduce wolf numbers considering yearly growth; assuming a pre-winter population of 60-62 wolves, the wolf harvest would likely need to be 45-47 wolves from all methods (trapping, hunting, and wolf control) to reduce the wolf population and result in a reduction in predation rates on moose; the hunting season and bag limit for wolves has remained unchanged since 1989 but the bag limit on the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, which was limited to 2 wolves per year on the refuge, was liberalized to 5 wolves per year in 2011; the trapping season and bag limits have been the same since 1997, additional active management methods are necessary to reduce the wolf population;
 - e) roughly 79% of Unit 15(A) is Federal land, 18% is private land, and 3% is state/borough land; wolf control will be initiated pending authorization by land managers/owners;
- 4) The Board requests that the commissioner work cooperatively with the Department of Natural Resources and area landowners, and especially the USFWS, to achieve habitat improvement through burning, timber harvest, and other recognized and prudent active management techniques.
 - 5) the authorized methods and means used to take wolves include: hunting and trapping of wolves by the public in Unit 15(A) during the term of the management program as provided in the hunting and trapping regulations; the commissioner may issue public aerial shooting permits, public land and shoot permits, or allow agents of the state, or department employees to conduct aerial, land and shoot, or ground-based shooting as a method of wolf removal under AS 16.05.783, including the use of any type of aircraft; prey harvest may include bull-only harvests with variable combinations of antler restrictions, any-bull hunts, and/or antlerless harvest;
 - a) Factors described in Section 3 and other considerations unique to the situation indicate that aerial shooting of wolves by members of the public under permit is the desired option to reduce predation in the management area described in Section 1 to a level sufficient to improve survival of moose and the potential for population growth.
 - b) Based on measured response of biological parameters additional airborne shooting of wolves by the Department may be necessary to reach the upper levels of intensive management objectives for harvest,
 - 6) the anticipated time frame, schedule for update and reevaluation and conditions for termination of the plan are as follows:
 - a) this plan is for 5 years (January 2012–June 30, 2017) unless renewed;

- b) annually the department shall, to the extent practicable, provide to the board a report of program activities conducted during the preceding 12 months, including implementation activities, the status of the moose and wolf populations, and recommendations for changes, if necessary to achieve the objectives of the plan;
 - c) Predator control activities shall be terminated;
 - i) when the upper levels of intensive management objectives for the moose population size and harvest are exceeded; or
 - ii) upon expiration of the period during which the commissioner is authorized to reduce predator numbers in the predator control plan area;
- 7) the program will be suspended if one of the following conditions are met:
- a) if there is no detectable increase in calf:cow ratios after 3 years of predation control, indicating that there is no significant improvement in calf survival;
 - b) if after 3 years, any measure consistent with significant levels of nutritional stress are identified.];
 - c) annually if the wolf population falls below 15 wolves at any time estimated from one or more of the following techniques: population survey, population census, modeling, harvest, or pilot and trapper interviews;