

ACR 11 – Increase the number of nonresident drawing permits for brown bear in the remainder of Unit 22.

SUBMITTED BY: Alaska Department of Fish & Game

MEETING ACR SUBMITTED FOR: 2016 Statewide Regulations

CITE THE REGULATION THAT WILL BE CHANGED IF THIS ACR IS HEARD.

85.020 (20). Seasons and bag limits for brown bears.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM YOU WOULD LIKE THE BOARD TO ADDRESS? STATE IN DETAIL THE NATURE OF THE CURRENT PROBLEM. Increase the number of nonresident drawing permits for brown bear in the Remainder of Unit 22. In this portion of Unit 22, nonresident hunting is managed through drawing hunt DB690 with permits issued for a combined hunt area in Units 22(D) and 22(E). The nonresident bag limit is for one bear every regulatory year by drawing permit with season dates of Aug 1 – May 31. The hunt is fully subscribed at 12 permits, the maximum number of permits allowed in the current regulation.

The Department does not have a population estimate of brown bears in Unit 22 and this makes it difficult to assess the status of the brown bear population in the area affected by drawing hunt DB690. However, beginning in 1997, and based on continued evidence of strong bear populations, the Board of Game incrementally liberalized Unit 22 brown bear regulations through increased bag limits, lengthened seasons, and elimination of the resident tag fee. Overall, the liberalized Unit 22 brown bear regulations produced a 74% increase in brown bear harvest. Between RY1990-RY1997 the average annual Unit 22 harvest was 54 bears, and between RY1998-RY2013 the average annual Unit 22 harvest was 94 bears. Similar results were observed in Unit 22(D) where harvest increased 88%. Between RY1990-RY1997 the average annual harvest was 9 bears, and between RY1998-RY2013 the average annual harvest was 17 bears. In Unit 22(E) the average annual harvest increased 33% as a result of liberalized regulations. Between RY1990-RY1997 the average annual harvest was 3 bears, and between RY1998-RY2013 the average annual harvest was 4 bears. During this period of liberalized harvests, the reported harvest in Units 22(D) and 22(E) remained consistent with the management goal of maintaining a 3-year mean annual reported harvest of at least 50% boars. Sealing records indicate 56% (42 of 75) and 77% (17 of 22) of bears taken between RY1990 and RY1997 were boars, respectively in Units 22(D) and 22(E); and 62% (162 of 263) and 80% (53 of 66) of bears taken between RY1998 and RY2013 were boars, respectively. Based on these factors the department believes the brown bear population in Units 22(D) and 22(E) is not being overharvested and there is room for additional sustainable harvest.

The total nonresident harvest of brown bears by drawing permit DB690 permit from RY1998 to RY2013 was 77 bears. Generally, nonresident harvest occurs through guided hunts in the American/Agiapuk river drainages in Unit 22(D) and in Unit 22(E), both locations where local

residents express little interest in hunting brown bears. The current DB690 regulation is fully subscribed at 12 permits issued annually; increasing the number of DB690 permits will allow more nonresidents to apply and increase the opportunity to harvest a brown bear.

Moose populations in Units 22(D) and 22(E) are surveyed by stratified sampling methods. In 2014, the spring moose population survey in Unit 22(D) Remainder estimated 491 ($\pm 14\%$ at 90% C.I.) observable moose which is a 14% annual rate of decline between 2011 and 2014. In this area, 10-month old short-yearlings have ranged from 12% - 26% of the population since 2002. In Unit 22(E), the 2014 spring moose population survey estimated 701 observable moose ($\pm 14\%$ at 90% C.I.) which represents a stable population; and 10-month old short-yearlings have ranged from 10% - 18% since 2003. Increasing the harvest of brown bears through increased numbers of drawing permits is expected to help relieve predatory pressure on moose and help increase numbers of moose in these areas.

WHAT SOLUTION DO YOU PREFER? Increase the number of nonresident drawing permits to 21 permits total in the Remainder of Unit 22. This is an increase of 75% (9 permits) by changing available permits from 12 to 21.

STATE IN DETAIL HOW THIS ACR MEETS THE CRITERIA STATED ABOVE.

a) for a conservation purpose or reason: N/A

b) to correct an error in regulation: N/A

c) to correct an effect on a hunt that was unforeseen when a regulation was adopted: At the time the nonresident drawing permit regulation was adopted, increasing brown bear populations and resultant increased sustainable harvest was not forecasted and integrated into the drawing permit regulation. The limited number of drawing permits is an unforeseen consequence of a regulation based on a smaller population of brown bears, and a regulation applied to an area with low rates of resident brown bear harvest. Increasing the number of nonresident brown bear drawing permits will help offset the unforeseen decline in nonresident moose hunting opportunity in Unit 22(D) in the last four years.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF THIS PROBLEM IS NOT SOLVED PRIOR TO THE REGULAR CYCLE? Annual brown bear harvest will be below maximum potential for a period of 2 years (RY2016, RY2017). Regular cycle action for the Arctic and Western Region (Region V) would be effective in RY2018.

STATE WHY YOUR ACR IS NOT PREDOMINANTLY ALLOCATIVE. Increasing the number of DB690 available is not a predominantly an allocative issue because the resident season is not a permit hunt and consists of a general season hunt and subsistence hunt (RB699) in Units 22(D) and 22(E) for one bear every regulatory year with season dates of Aug 1 – May

31. Increasing the number of nonresident DB690 permits gives the potential to increase brown bear harvest in these two hunt areas.

IF THIS REQUEST IS ALLOCATIVE, STATE THE NEW INFORMATION THAT COMPELS THE BOARD TO CONSIDER AN ALLOCATIVE PROPOSAL OUTSIDE OF THE REGULAR CYCLE. N/A

STATE YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE ISSUE THAT IS THE SUBJECT OF THIS ACR. Alaska Department Fish and Game, hunt manager.

STATE WHETHER THIS ACR HAS BEEN CONSIDERED BEFORE, EITHER AS A PROPOSAL OR AS AN ACR, AND IF SO, DURING WHICH BOARD OF GAME MEETING. This ACR has not been considered before as an ACR or a proposal.