Middle Nenana River Advisory Committee
30 November 2016
Healy High School

I. Call to Order: 6:07 by John Basile

II. Roll Call:
Members Present:
John Basile
Nan Eagleson
Jacob Mattila
Matt Nutsvold
Allan Mortenson
Erik Haugen
Wayne Valcq
Jeremy Wolf (Elected today)

Members Absent:
Leroy Sutton (unexcused)
Paul Van Dyke (unexcused)
Coke Wallace (excused)
Myron Stokes (unexcused)

Number Needed for Quorum on AC: 6

List of User Groups Present: None

III. Approval of Agenda: Agenda reviewed and approved; unanimous.

IV. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes: Minutes reviewed and approved; unanimous.

V. Fish and Game Staff Present: Don Young, Alaska Department of Fish and Game Biologist for Unit 20.

VI. Guests Present: None

VII. Old Business: None

VIII. New Business:

-Three seats were up for election:

Healy Seat B; Jacob Mattila nominated John Basile, Nan Eagleson seconded. All in favor; unanimous.
Healy Seat C; John Basile nominated Coke Wallace, Allan Mortenson seconded. All in favor; unanimous.
Healy undesignated; undesignated seat vacated by John Carter; John Basile nominated Jeremy Wolf, Jacob Mattila seconded. Nan asked for an introduction. Jeremy stated he has been a Healy resident for six years. He is an avid outdoorsman and enjoys hunting and trapping. All in favor; unanimous.

- Officer positions were up for election:
Secretary; Erik Haugen volunteered. All in favor; unanimous.
Vice Chair; Allan Mortenson volunteered to remain Vice Chair. All in favor; unanimous.
Chair; no one stepped up to take the Chair. John Basile remained the Chair.

- Don Young from the Department of Fish and Game (F&G) provided discussion on the cow harvest proposed for Unit 20A.

- There are cow hunts listed in the draw supplement this year. The F&G is looking for feedback from the advisory committees. Any committee in Unit 20 can weigh in on this. Most committees not in the area do not weigh in on other unit's hunts. Don is pushing the F&G to have a separate antlerless draw in the spring. It helps to have all the data gathered from harvest statistics, and gives the F&G time to review and actually determine how many antlerless tags they would like to give.

- This draw is controversial because of its roots in the 1970's. Don provided a packet on *Prudent and Imprudent use of Antlerless Moose Harvests in Interior Alaska*. In the 1940's there were large wildfires in unit 20A. In the 1950's there was indiscriminate predator control. In 1960's the moose population reached its peak. The late 60's and early 70's had hard winters. The population declined from 23,000 to 2,800. The state decided to do an antlerless hunt in the 70's because F&G thought food was in decline and the range could not sustain the herd. Cow harvest rates were 10 to 19 % of the population. This probably drove the population lower, where as an antlerless hunt earlier on would have been more effective. There was no accurate way to get moose population estimates at that time. Conservative harvest measures were taken afterwards and by the 1980's the population was up to between 12,000 and 13,000, then increased to between 17,000 and 18,000. Then a biologist noticed nutrition rates were dropping and calf production was in decline. This is when antlerless hunts were reviewed again. In 2004, we saw a population of 18,000. Moose were not in good condition and calf weights were low; twin rates were low as well. F&G implemented aggressive antlerless hunts from 2004 through 2008 to get the population down around 12,000. They did use data from the 1970's to determine that anything more than a 5% harvest was too much. Harvest of antlerless moose from 2004 through 2008 was 4 to 5 % of the population. It was waned down to 2%, then 1% of the population. This was done to examine the following moose productivity and health of the heard. Through 2014, 2015, and 2016 there were no

antlerless harvests. Last years population post hunt was 12,500. Pre-hunt (600 bulls harvested) was 13,100.
- F&G is now looking to keep the heard at 12,000. Don is recommending an antlerless hunt to target 1%, about 100 animals, to start the antlerless harvest. Unit 20A is 6,700 square miles, and F&G is trying to distribute the harvest amongst this zones. Some zones get more concentration such as Rex Trail. A thought was to make 20A into 7, 1000 sq mile zones, but it was too difficult.
- F&G did not have techniques to accurately estimate moose populations in the 1970's, now they do, so the 2000's antlerless harvest and impact was more accurately tracked. On good range, all cows would have had a calf. On poor range, only 30% of cows would have calves; in these times F&G looked at the range and saw poor food.
- Nan asked if there was data on the number of hunters in the 1970's versus today. There was not much data, but there is data on the harvest. In the 2000's, before the antlerless hunts, there was approximately 1000 hunters. When the antlerless hunt came in, there were as many as 1800 hunters in 20A.
- Erik asked a question about the antlerless tags in supplement. The tags in the supplement are not approved yet, and F&G is waiting for next spring's data on health of heard. F&G can issue Emergency Orders to close antlerless hunt. No population survey was conducted in 2014, and as a result, there was no antlerless hunt because F&G could not accurately track population.
- 20A is a high-density moose population area, with two to three moose per square mile.
- In 2004, the objective moose population was 12,000. F&G Board made a decision to move it to between 12,000 and 15,000. Recently F&G decided to move the objective again; the board stated estimates are accurate to between 10 and 15%. If estimates come in less or lower, then board needs to act through regulation changes and predator control. The board changed the population objective to 10,000 to 15,000; this number changes aids as a buffer in decision-making.
- Proposal 125. F&G has put in this proposal to reinstate the antlerless hunt. F&G has to get the antlerless hunt reauthorized. F&G also needs AC input and support to reauthorize it. F&G has the population where it wants it. To keep the population here, F&G will start with harvesting 100 cows to help manage the future population. This management strategy helps reduce the chance of having to enact very unpopular aggressive moose population reductions later. AC's generally do not prefer winter hunts, and would rather manage the population through draw hunts. F&G proposes to keep hunts at a low level (1%), and continue to monitor the populations. When you have a high density of moose on the range for a long time, it is hard on the browse, and they plants do not recover quickly. This compromises moose that grow up in these lean years, and affects their offspring as well.
- Wayne asked if there is any data from 1970 through 1975 to see effects of population management. Don stated that it was not until 1978 that F&G had a way to estimate the population. Wayne stated that when he was out at Gold King in the 1970's there were not many hunters; there were moose and caribou out there back then. In the 1970's there were two seasons, and early and a late season.
- Wayne asked when would the F&G like to have cow hunt? Don stated there would be three hunt periods: a period the same as general hunt, then two more spread out through November. This prevents conflict and pressure with the bull hunters in the general hunt.
- Wayne asked, what is the max you want to take? Don stated about 100.

- Wayne also asked, is the price still the same? Don said yes. Wayne, it should be higher up to $100; talk to Dave Telrico.
- Don, bull harvest is different. Any bull showed harvest of 600 bulls, versus antler restriction, which is 350. F&G uses the any bull special draw in each zone to manage the difference between the target and the harvest number the F&G would like. F&G wants to harvest one out of every five bulls.
-Nan, asked has there been any language to say some type of horn or nub. Don, there is a proposal in the book to discuss that.
- Wayne, have you done anything about the four or three brow tine pool? Don said no. There is discussion to get a geneticist on board to help with this. Currently F&G does not have that capability. Wayne, if you read about western states where they manage what animal is harvested, they get bigger and bigger bulls. Don, where this falls apart is the genetics for the tines are also carried by the cow, so it is not just dependent on the bull. Wayne, for three years I have seen bulls with a dropped antler; some bull has spread that gene around. Don, agree, but also the cow in the area could have that gene and it could be responsible. It's complicated to try to manage for specific antlers.
- This has become more in the forefront on sheep because of the discussion on harvesting full curls. Allan, noticed much more measuring and pictures on horns that he took in to be sealed. Don, said the sheep biologist has started this to gather data. F&G is collecting data such as degree of curl and genetics from a plug taken from the horn. Allan, this is a good thing and interesting to see same age rams from different units to compare. Don, Average curl for sheep was 380 degrees. Only 1 or 2 brought in that were sublegal. This could be because of the new packet of information that was put out; F&G is working on a field manual.

- Don, we did do wolf surveys. Estimates for wolf density is comparable to previous years. In 20A we range about 250 wolves. Packs are stable with 20 to 25 packs. This is based on the winters; nothing out of the ordinary. F&G tried to do a bear survey, but did not find what they thought, they did not find very many bears. This is not conclusive because they are not sure if they are missing bears or not flushing them out when surveying.

- Jacob, how many muzzleloader hunt bulls were harvested? Don, average is 12; 75 tags are given.

- Other questions? None noted.

Discussion moved on to proposals in 2016/2017 proposed changes. AC would like to have more public participation.

Commented on proposal:

125
72 (tabled until next meeting)
47
126
51

73
138
127, 128, 129
141
142

Move Prop 72 to future business to discuss when Coke Wallace returns.

Next meeting set for 25 January in Anderson.

Meeting adjourned

Alaska Board of Game Interior Region Meeting Feb. 17-25, 2017, Fairbanks			
Proposal Number	**Proposal Description**		
Support, Support as Amended, Oppose, No Action	**Number Support**	**Number Oppose**	**Comments, Discussion (list Pros and Cons), Amendments to Proposal**
47	Change the definition of "edible meat" for game birds		
Opposed	8	0	John made a motion to discuss. John does like this because trappers use the carcasses for trapping bait. What is the department's position? Don said the F&G is neutral on this. John made a motion to support, Allan seconds.
51	Prohibit nonresident hunting of any prey species under intensive management in the Interior/Northeast Arctic Region until harvest and population objectives are met		
Support	8	0	Nan made motion so support this. Don, F&G is neutral on this; F&G just proposed a manageable harvest. Nan, many people are not supportive of intensive prey (moose) specious management. It should be for residents, not nonresidents, to decide since we the residents are trying to manage the animals for our consumption and use. It appears to be a contradiction to have a population under intensive management and let non-residents hunt the species. It also states that this is until the harvest objective is met. Nan made motion to support; Erik seconds.
72	Allow the harvest of wolf and coyote by land and shoot with a trapping license in the Interior/Northeast Arctic Region		
			Nan started discussion. Very opposed to this method of harvest. Allan sees this as a business proposal because it includes non-residents. Coke's reasoning is flawed. The sheep harvest numbers and statement by Don Young that sheep are in good shape contradicts Coke's reasoning. Jacob asked Don the department's stance. Don's stated the department plans to take no action on this. Because same day take of wolves outside of a predator control area is illegal and outside boards control. Move to table until next meeting.
73	Allow the use of dogs to hunt coyote in Unit 20		
Support	5	3	Erik made motion to discuss. I do not support because of half-in hunters not using trained dogs, and the dogs would chase moose or other prey specious. Public asked what about effects to mushers. Matt thought little. Erik made motion to oppose, John

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Support, Support as Amended, Oppose, No Action	Number Support	Number Oppose	Comments, Discussion (list Pros and Cons), Amendments to Proposal
			seconds.
125	Reauthorize the antlerless moose hunting seasons in Unit 20A		
Support	7	1	Jacob made a motion to discuss this proposal. Jacob makes a motion to support base on Don Young's information, Matt seconds. Wayne opposed.
126	Modify the muzzleloader hunting season for moose in Unit 20A		
Support as amended	8	0	Allan made motion to discuss. Don stated the board is neutral. Allan has talked to many hunters and they would like to move the date back. Jacob, would it matter to keep it open from 1 Nov and push it back to 10 Dec close? Don said no. Allan made a motion to support, Matt seconds. **Amend to start 1 Nov and go through 10 December.**
127	Change the antler restrictions for moose hunting in Unit 20A		
Oppose	0	8	Erik made motion to discuss. Don stated department stance is to oppose. In 1988 added antler restriction to manage population. The F&G made the any bull a special tag to tweak the harvest. The current system is working and took 14 years to get to this point. If we go any bull, we would have to shorten the season substantially. The Department has refined it enough to a good point. This zone is a intensive management area, and using the current system helps guide the max yield out of the unit. Wayne asked if you changed the end date of a season year to year, could you get more management or moose? Don stated it is hard to say. Some areas are very accessible and some are not. We give the special permits to guide the harvest number. Wayne stated bigger bulls do not rut until later, and the bigger bulls become more vulnerable in the late dates. Don said, why keep a legal bull in the herd; why not harvest him. Wayne felt management of days or length of the hunt helps as well. When the season is short, there are more bulls around. Don, years ago department went to antler restriction across the unit because moose moved around the area from flats to hills. Erik made motion to oppose based on this data, John seconds.
128	Change the antler restrictions for moose hunting in Unit 20A		
Oppose	0	8	See Discussion on 127.
129	Change the antler restrictions for moose hunting in Unit 20A		
Oppose	0	8	See Discussion on 127.
136	Reevaluate the intensive management finding for the Delta caribou herd		
			Don, Fairbanks AC forced the hand that the Board should be proactive on the objectives of the population, or take the herd out of IM. There is no evidence that herd has recovered from early 80's and 90's. F&G thins herd should be around 4000; currently F&G thinks it is at 3000, but they are not sure because a survey has not been done. It is hard to count because they mix with Nelchina and Maccomb. F&G has stated they need a feasibility assessment. No vote on this, just discussion.
137	Implement an intensive management program for the Delta caribou herd		
			Don, Fairbanks AC forced the hand that the Board should be proactive on the objectives of the population, or take the herd out of IM. There is no evidence that herd has recovered from early 80's and 90's. F&G thins herd should be around 4000; currently think it is at 3000, but not sure because survey has not been done. Hard to count because they mix with Nelchina and Maccomb. F&G has stated they need a feasibility

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			assessment. No vote on this, just discussion.
138	Lengthen the hunting season for brown bear in Units 20A and 20B remainder		
Support as amended	6	2	Allan made motion to support this proposal. Jacob brought up that at last meeting F&G did not support because they felt the population could not support it. Don stated the board opposes due to population concerns. F&G does not have good data on the population of bears, and overharvest of bears could be high. F&G recommends a conservative approach to harvest of bears. Allan stated there are many bears in this unit and they only come out to bait. In addition he stated that the landfill has many bears around it. Allan proposed amending the proposal to exclude 20B since it is a high bear-bait station area. Allan made motion to support as amended, Matt seconds.
141	Close a portion of Unit 20C to the taking of wolf		
oppose	6	2	See 142.
142	Close a portion of Unit 20 near Denali National Park to the taking of wolf		
oppose	6	2	Jacob made a motion to discuss. Don, the board will be interested in hearing the AC's take. Nan stated wolves leave the park to follow caribou out, and the population has gone way down. Many people in the park love to see the wolves. The buffer zone really benefited the park and its visitors. Wayne stated that when the board approved this back in the day, it was because we wanted to be good neighbors with the park. The park wanted more even after this buffer zone. Every year the park wanted more buffer and more area, and by Wayne's opinion, this is why the AC went back to no buffer zone. Nan stated there should be some place, like the park, that is for natural abundance. The data the park has gathered shows the wolf population is struggling because the buffer is gone. Allan made a motion to vote to oppose; John seconded.

Adjournment:

Minutes Recorded By: Erik J. Haugen
Minutes Approved By: _____
Date: _____