

Palmer Area – Units 14A, 14B & 16

PROPOSAL 77 – 5 AAC 85.045(12). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose. Reauthorize the antlerless moose draw permits in Units 14A and 14B and increase permit levels in Unit 14A as follows:

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
(12)		
Unit 14(A)		
1 moose per regulatory year, only as follows:		
...		
1 antlerless moose by drawing permit only; up to 1,500 [1000] antlerless moose permits may be issued.	Aug. 20–Sept. 25 (General hunt only) Nov. 1–Dec. 15 (General hunt only)	No open season
...		
1 moose by targeted permit only; and by shotgun or archery only; up to 200 permits may be issued.	Winter season to be announced (General hunt only)	No open season
Unit 14(B)		
1 moose per regulatory year, only as follows:		
...		
1 moose by targeted permit only; and by shotgun or archery only; up to 100 permits may be issued.	Winter season to be announced (General hunt only)	No open season

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Antlerless moose hunts must be reauthorized annually by the Board of Game. There are two types of antlerless moose hunts in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley—a drawing permit hunt used to regulate growth of the moose

population in Unit 14A and targeted hunts used to mitigate public safety concerns in Units 14A and 14B.

Moose surveys conducted in February 2017 yielded an estimate of 8,700 moose in Unit 14A. This estimate was greater than the post-hunt objective of 6,000–6,500 moose and greater than the 2013 survey estimate of 8,500 moose with a bull ratio of 21 bulls:100 cows and a calf ratio of 45 calves:100 cows.

Antlerless moose hunts have been authorized in Unit 14A since 2001 in order to regulate the growth of the population. The permit level was increased from 450 to 1,000 in 2013 to account for the continued increase in the population. Despite increased permit levels and increased harvest, the population has remained above the post-hunt population objective. Based upon the current population estimate, the decreasing trend in the calf twinning rate, and the impact on the available habitat as observed in a recent browse removal study, further increases in the permit allocation may be warranted in order to reduce the population to a sustainable level.

The current increases in the harvest have seemingly slowed the population growth; however it has not reduced the moose population to within objectives. If the density of moose is allowed to increase, we anticipate an increase in the number of moose-human conflicts, and moose may experience nutritional stress as the population nears carrying capacity. Cow harvests are warranted to control the moose population’s growth and recommended as a way to provide additional moose hunting opportunity in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley.

The targeted moose hunts in Units 14A and 14B are an effective tool to address public safety concerns related to moose-vehicle collision and nuisance management issues. Moose-vehicle collisions result in property damage and may result in human injury or death. An average of 266 moose per year were killed in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley area during the last few years of average snowfall and substantially more were killed during higher snowfall years. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game also receives periodic complaints from the public about crop depredation and aggressive behavior that can be mitigated by this hunt structure.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F17-035)

PROPOSAL 78 – 5 AAC 85.045(12). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose. Authorize an any bull draw permit hunt in Unit 14B as follows:

	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
Units and Bag Limits		
(12)		
Unit 14(B)		

1 moose per regulatory year, only as follows:

1 bull with spike-fork antlers or antlers with 3 or more brow tines on one side, by bow and arrow only; or

Aug. 10–Aug. 17 (General hunt only)

Aug. 10–Aug. 17

1 bull with spike-fork antlers or antlers with 3 or more brow tines on one side; or

Aug. 25–Sept. 25 (General hunt only)

Aug. 25–Sept. 25

1 bull moose by drawing permit only; up to 100 permits may be issued

Aug. 25–Sept. 25

No open season.

1 moose by targeted permit only; by shotgun or archery only; up to 100 permits may be issued

Winter season to be announced by emergency order.

No open season.

...

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? This proposal liberalizes moose hunting in Unit 14B to provide additional harvest opportunities for resident hunters in response to a growing moose population. In 2009 the population was estimated at 1,662 moose with a bull:cow ratio of 34:100 and a calf:cow ratio of 18:100. In 2013 the population estimate was within population objective (2,500–2,800) at 2,700 with a bull:cow ratio of 30:100 and a calf:cow ratio of 28:100. The 2013–2016 average harvest was 91 moose which is under the harvest objective of 100-200 moose. Providing additional harvest opportunity through a draw hunt for any bull will aid in achieving the harvest objective while maintaining the management goal of ensuring a bull to cow ratio of ≥ 20 bulls:100 cows.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

(HQ-F17-036)

PROPOSAL 79 – 5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep. Modify the hunt structure for Dall sheep in Unit 14A as follows:

In all of Unit 14A, a legal ram will be full-curl, broken on both horns, or at least eight years old. From August 10 to August 25, retain the current draw permit system in hunt DS170, DS270, DS180, DS280, DS190 and DS290. **Increase the nonresident allocation from 10% to 20% in these draws.** That is what it originally should have been set at back in 2008 but the Board of Game (board) didn't follow its own policy back then. **Set the number of permits at one for**

nonresidents in each hunt and four for residents. You want to set the permits in these hunts very low at first until you build up the population of full-curl rams and then increase them.

Aircraft are not allowed to be used for sheep hunting in any manner in Unit 14A south and east of the Matanuska River for any sheep hunt that starts on the August 26 or later.

From August 26 to September 20 retain the draw permit hunt for nonresidents and residents in hunts DS275, DS285, DS295, DS175, DS185 and DS195, **with only one permit issued for each hunt for nonresidents hunts and four being issued for resident hunts. After two years there should be enough full-curles in the population to switch resident hunt numbers DS175, DS185 and DS195 to registration hunts with very conservative harvest goals and two years later change the nonresident hunts to registration also along with the residents and manage both residents and nonresidents as one hunt with harvest goals for each of the three areas in this part of Unit 14A.** When both residents and nonresidents go to a registration hunt by 2023, there will be no allocation between them just like in the Tonsina walk-in area.

If the board adopts this proposal, it might consider changing the draw permits that will be issued in 2018 from any ram to full-curl before they are issued.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Change the Dall sheep hunts in Unit14A south of the Matanuska River from any ram to full-curl, broken on both horns, or at least eight years old. Also change the second hunt from August 25 to September 20 to a registration hunt for residents but retain the draw portion for nonresidents. Aircraft would not be allowed to be used in any manner for the second hunt.

The current hunts in Unit 14A are being managed for any ram and they were put in place in 2008. The idea was to increase the number of old rams in the population by allowing the harvest of any ram thus taking the pressure off of the full-curles. To do this there were going to be a very limited number of permits issued. That management strategy has not been followed in the last five years or more as the Department of Fish and Game is now issuing 75 any ram permits in this area. Right now there are still very few full-curl rams in this population. When this management strategy was first implemented with the hope of rebuilding the sheep population, especially the number of older rams in it, the hoped for long term goal was to get back to an open general season again. I think we can do that with the changes I'm suggesting.

PROPOSED BY: Dan Montgomery (EG-F17-070)

PROPOSAL 80 – 5 AAC 85.040. Hunting seasons and bag limits for goat. Open a resident registration hunt for mountain goat in Unit 14A as follows:

Retain the draw goat hunts DG890 and DG891 for nonresidents only. **Issue only two permits for DG890 and three permits for DG891.**

Create a residents only registration hunt RS890 for Metal Creek and another RG891 for residents only in Marcus Baker. Set the harvest goals at 6% of the total count of the latest aerial survey of this area.

The hunting season will stay the same September 1 to October 15. There will be no allocation between residents and nonresidents. The season will close when the harvest goal is met.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? I want to change the mountain goat draw permit hunts, numbers DG890 and DG891 to registration hunts for residents and retain the draw for nonresidents. When this was first put into a draw permit hunt back in 2007 or there about, there was still a general sheep hunt in these areas. Every sheep hunter in this area got a registration permit for goats also and the quota was being filled very quickly. With all the sheep in this area now on draw I believe it will take much longer to fill it. Keeping the nonresidents on a draw will also slow the harvest down a lot.

PROPOSED BY: Dan Montgomery (EG-F17-071)

PROPOSAL 81 – 5 AAC 85.020. Seasons and bag limits for brown bear, and 92.044. Permit for hunting bear with the use of bait or sent lures. Increase the bag limit for brown bear and allow the harvest of brown bear at black bear bait stations in Unit 14A as follows:

In Unit 14A (or just that portion of Unit 14A west of the Little Susitna River and west of the Parks Highway), increase the bag limit to one brown bear every regulatory year AND allow brown bear to be taken at black bear bait stations.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? There seems to be a significant increase in the numbers of brown bear at least in that area of Unit 14A, which lies west of the Little Susitna River and west of the Parks Highway. This has been noticed by hunters operating black bear bait stations in this area. It has been difficult to maintain black bear bait stations because of marauding brown bear. There also seems to be a decline in the moose population in this area possibly due to predation by brown bear.

PROPOSED BY: The Alaskan Bowhunters Association (EG-F17-062)

PROPOSAL 82 – 5 AAC 92.530. Management areas. Create a management area for the Mat-Su Borough’s Government Peak Recreation Area in Unit 14A as follows:

5 AAC 92.530 Management areas.

(##) The Matanuska-Susitna Borough's Government Peak Recreation Area – (see State of Alaska, Hatcher Pass Management Plan, Government Peak management unit, Northern and Southern Development areas)

(A) the area consists of borough-owned lands within the Government Peak management unit

under the Hatcher Pass Management Plan;

(i) the area is open to hunting by bow and arrow only.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Matanuska-Susitna Borough has lands in the Northern and Southern Development areas of the Government Peak management unit near Hatcher Pass which have been developed with trails for biking, hiking, and skiing. The highly developed nature of this area has resulted in some concerns with hunting regulations and the use of firearms. This area is identified under 11 AAC 96.014(b)(3)(E) which states:

(E) in the High Glacier Peaks, Government Peak, Independence, and Mile 16 management units and in portions of the Archangel and Reed Lakes/Little Susitna management units, as shown on the *Hatcher Pass Special Use Area Map 2*, a person may not use or discharge a firearm except for the purpose of lawful hunting; however, a person may not use or discharge a firearm for any purpose

(i) within the Independence State Mine Historical Park, the Summit Lake State Recreation Site, and the Northern and Southern Development areas in the Government Peak management unit;

There is a need to update the ADF&G Hunting Regulation Booklet for Unit 14A to identify the Northern and Southern Development areas of the Government Peak management unit as restricted areas for firearms. The ADF&G Hunting Regulations Booklet is highly regarded by the public, and adding the information to show that these areas are off limits to firearms for any purpose needs to be publicized.

Please reference: The State of Alaska, Hatcher Pass Management Plan; and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Government Peak Unit Asset Management and Development Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Land and Resource Management Division
(EG-F17-026)

PROPOSAL 83 – 5 AAC 85.045. Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose. Change the antler restrictions for moose hunting in Unit 16A as follows:

Proposed solution: One bull with spike-fork or three brow tines on at least one side.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Change the Unit 16A antler restrictions to spike-fork or three brow tines on at least one side. Do away with the 50-inch rule. The reason is too many illegal bulls are being taken with the 50-inch rule. They are not 50 inches after people shoot and measure the spread. This should be a statewide regulation. In areas with four brow tines it should read four not three.

PROPOSED BY: Neil DeWitt
(EG-F17-028)

PROPOSAL 84 – 5 AAC 92.108. Identified big game prey populations and objectives. Raise the population objective for moose in Unit 16B as follows:

The Unit 16B moose population is most likely going to be estimated to be above the current population objective and will likely continue to grow further above since habitat is not limiting productivity and predators are no longer limiting population growth. It would be wise in my opinion to raise the moose population to reflect this reality.

The new moose population objective for Unit 16B should be 1.5–2 moose per square mile of available moose habitat or 10,000 to 13,000 moose.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The moose population objective for Unit 16B is well below carrying capacity. By the time this proposal is deliberated on in 2018 it will have been five years since ADF&G determined that the moose population was near the upper end of the current population objective of 6,500–7,500 moose or 1–1.2 moose per square mile of the approximately 6,500 square miles of moose habitat in the unit. The moose population estimate, if and when ADF&G conducts any new ones since the 2013 one done in the north (unless they do one in the south), will likely show that the moose population is above the objective using the new measured sightability correction factor. Twinning rates have remained high, around 50%, since 2013 at the same time the moose population was estimated to be near the upper end of the objective, indicating that the habitat can support more moose than 7,500 new count. Since the population has likely grown beyond 7,500 since 2013 and twinning rates have remained steady, it indicates that a population above 7,500 moose is not habitat limited. If you live here and see the amount of willow that remains untouched during winter, you might surmise that winter range is not limiting the moose population. According to ADF&G estimates, Unit 16B south has been at 1.5 moose per square mile of available moose habitat since 2010. This indicates that 1.5 moose per square mile would make a fine lower objective for the unit. The Unit 16A moose population objective is roughly 2.2 to 2.6 moose per square mile. If Unit 16A can support 2.2 moose per square mile, I think it reasonable to assume Unit 16B can support two moose per square mile of available habitat.

PROPOSED BY: David McHoes (EG-F17-018)

PROPOSAL 85 – 5 AAC 85.045. Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose. Lengthen the resident hunting season for moose in Unit 16B Remainder (DM540, YM541 and RM574) as follows:

The solution to the problem is to expand the any bull fall moose harvest opportunity. How we do this is the debate. I suggest we go back to the refugia system of management where we trust that the inaccessible areas of the unit will protect the bulls from over harvest. This was a proven method prior to the 1993 antler restriction management system. ADF&G appears to want to micromanage the harvest. I have a hard time figuring out how this can be done when we rarely collect population and/or composition data. The concern with over participation causing conflicts in the field may be valid. This could be dealt with by restricting any bull seasons to August 20 to

September 10 a rarely utilized part of the season. In an effort to allow all Alaskans who desire to participate in any bull hunting in Unit 16B, I submit the following proposal:

My solution to chronic under-harvest of the surplus bulls of the unit in the fall is replace the existing hunts DM540, YM541 and RM574 with an August 20 to September 30 any bull bag limit for residents.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Unit 16B moose population is now a growing population which has led to a growing harvestable surplus of bulls. Increased calf survival (up from the lows of ten calves per 100 cows to highs of near 50 calves per 100 cows in much of the unit) has also increased the yearly supply of harvestable bulls. Two recently created draw hunts were created with little or no public participation. DM540 and YM541 were created at the 2013 Board of Game (board) meeting from an ADF&G proposal to do minor changes to predator control plan under 5 AAC 92.125 has nothing to do with moose seasons. No proposal to create these seasons was ever put before the public prior to the board meeting; therefore no public input was received. Generally, changes in seasons and bag limits are considered "allocative" in nature and ADF&G generally takes no position on these matters. This was one of the most bizarre things I have witnessed at a board meeting. The youth hunt idea in particular could have benefited from some local knowledge of the hazardous and unreliable travel conditions in the unit during the youth trophy hunt conducted November 15 to December 15 known locally as "freeze up". The goal of these draw hunts was apparently to reach the midpoint of the unit's harvest objective. These hunts have failed in this objective.

The unit also has a recently created winter registration hunt on the books. This hunt was the result of an emergency petition by ADF&G to allocate moose from fall sport hunters to winter meat hunters. The justification was that their previously created hunts were failures in reaching the midpoint of the harvest objective. I find it odd that it is an emergency not to reach the midpoint of a harvest objective range when it was not an emergency for a decade during the 90s when we never reached the minimum and the harvestable surplus existed. I would like to make a public proposal that will be reviewed by the public, commented on by the public, and testified at the board meeting by the public to allocate the public's resource created by the combined efforts of the people of Alaska. The failure to reach the midpoint of the harvest objective is because of the restrictive nature of the fall hunt and goes back to the conversion of the unit to spike-fork, 50-inch in 1993. The moose hunt was converted due to concerns of increase participation due changes in adjacent units that had low bull/cow ratios where antler restrictions were put in place. The antler restrictions made it near impossible to achieve the unit harvest object although seasons were expanded. Eventually the declining moose population made it impossible.

PROPOSED BY: David McHoes (EG-F17-017)

PROPOSAL 86 – 5 AAC 92.044. Permit for hunting bear with the use of bait or scent lures.
Shorten the season for black bear baiting in Unit 16 as follows:

The black bear baiting season for Unit 16 should be reduced to April 15 to June 30.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The current black bear harvest (especially females) is unsustainable and continuing a decline in the black bear population. This was the goal of the Board of Game when they wanted to increase moose calf survival. Reported moose calf survival is between 35–45% up from 8–16%. Mission accomplished.

PROPOSED BY: David McHoes (EG-F17-014)

PROPOSAL 87 – 5 AAC 92.044. Permit for hunting bear with the use of bait or scent lures. Prohibit the harvest of brown bears at black bear bait stations in Unit 16 as follows:

Unit 16 should be removed from the list of units that allow harvesting of brown bears at black bear bait stations.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The current harvest of brown bears in Unit 16 is unsustainable. The Board of Game approved these levels of harvest to improve moose calf survival. Moose calf survival is between 35 and 45%. Brown bear harvest should be lowered to maintain or increase the bear population.

PROPOSED BY: David McHoes (EG-F17-015)

PROPOSAL 88 – 5 AAC 85.020. Seasons and bag limits for brown bear. Shorten the season and reduce the bag limit for brown bear in Unit 16 as follows:

The Unit 16A brown bear season should be reduced from "no closed season" to August 10 – May 31.

The Unit 16B brown bear season should be reduced from "no closed season" to August 10 – May 31.

The Unit 16B brown bear bag limit should be reduced from two bears to one bear.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Brown bear harvest in Unit 16 reflects the desire of the Board of Game to reduce the bear population and to increase moose survival. The moose population no longer requires bear population reductions. Harvest levels should be reduced to maintain or grow the brown bear population.

PROPOSED BY: David McHoes (EG-F17-016)

PROPOSAL 89 – 5 AAC 92.122. Intensive Management Plan VI. End the predator control program for black and brown bear in Unit 16 as follows:

Bear control program has been terminated due to objectives being met.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Unnecessary reductions in the black and brown bear populations. Both black and brown bear populations have been harvested at above sustainable levels for at least a decade to lower predation on moose calves. ADF&G data collected for the last four years has shown that moose calf survival is well above levels to grow the moose population. The issue has been resolved. Harvest levels should be returned to sustained yield levels.

PROPOSED BY: David McHoes (EG-F17-012)

PROPOSAL 90 – 5 AAC 92.095. Unlawful methods of taking furbearers; exceptions. Allow the harvest of beaver by firearms under a trapping license in Unit 16 as follows:

The Matanuska Valley Fish and Game Advisory Committee recommends adding Unit 16 to the units that allow for the harvest of beavers with a firearm under a trapping license. The regulatory language would duplicate that for Units 1–5 out of the current trapping regulations (see page 22): "Firearms may be used to harvest beaver in Unit 16."

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Currently, under a trapping license a person may harvest a beaver with a firearm in Units 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 12, 18, 19, 20A, 20C, 20E, 20F, 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25. Currently this is not allowed in Unit 16. Of late, southcentral Alaska has experienced warmer and shorter winters, leading to unsafe ice during much of the Unit 16 beaver trapping season. Allowing for the harvest of beavers in Unit 16 with a firearm will aid trapper safety and increase harvest, providing some much needed income for trappers in an already depressed market. At this time there is no biologic concern for beavers in Unit 16.

PROPOSED BY: Matanuska Valley Fish and Game Advisory Committee (EG-F17-021)
