

PROPOSAL 10

5 AAC 85.045(a)(16). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

Reauthorize the antlerless moose seasons in Unit 18 as follows:

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
(16) ...		
Unit 18, that portion south of and including the Goodnews River Drainage		
1 antlered bull by registration permit only; or	Sept. 1—Sept. 30	
1 moose by registration Permit only; During the Jan. 1–Jan 31 a season up to 21 days may be announced by emergency order	Jan. 1–Jan. 31 (Season to be announced)	
Remainder of Unit 18		
RESIDENT HUNTERS:		
Up to 2 moose; of which only 1 may be an antlered bull; a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf; or	Aug. 1—Sept. 30	
Up to 2 antlerless moose; or	Oct. 1—Nov. 30.	
Up to 2 moose	Dec. 1—Mar. 15	
NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:		
1 antlered bull: or		Sept. 1—Sept. 30

...

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? To be retained, the antlerless moose seasons in Unit 18 must be reauthorized annually. The current antlerless hunts in the Remainder of Unit 18 were adopted at the January 2014 Board of Game meeting in Kotzebue. The current antlerless hunt in the Goodnews Hunt area and nonresident antlerless hunt was adopted at the January 2017 Board of Game meeting in Bethel. The board has previously reauthorized the antlerless moose season for resident hunts in Unit 18 remainder for regulatory year (RY) 2016 through RY2019. This proposal requests reauthorization for RY2020.

Implementation of antlerless hunts began in 2007 and has continued each year due to increased moose abundance, productivity, and population growth along the Yukon River drainage in Unit 18. Based on the steady growth in moose populations and productivity, ADF&G proposes continued antlerless moose hunts in the Remainder of Unit 18.

Within the areas near the Yukon River, the moose population is estimated at a minimum of 14,000 animals. The most recent estimates of calf to adult ratios range from 14:100 in 2018 in the eastern portion of Unit 18 Remainder to 42:100 in 2017 in the western portion of Unit 18 remainder. Twinning rates have also declined from 50% for all areas in previous years to below 20% for the eastern portion of the hunt area. While the overall population still remains high, the recent declines in productivity and evidence of winterkill of calves and adults in the winter of 2018/2019 suggest that segments of this population may benefit from reduced harvest. The suggested possible reduction in the bag limit from 2 moose to “up to 2 moose” is the first step as the department evaluates harvest rates and declines in population and productivity that are likely due to density dependent factors. The “up to” language gives ADF&G the ability to reduce the bag limit portion as more information is gathered and analyzed.

Although the current year harvest data in the Remainder of Unit 18 has not been finalized due to the early proposal deadline, we expect harvest to be similar to the past four years and well within sustained yield for this robust population. Allowing antlerless harvest will benefit hunters through increased opportunity, and any increases in harvest may help slow the growth rate of the population in this portion of Unit 18.

The moose population in the Goodnews River drainage had grown steadily in the past 15 years following a closure in 2004. The hunt reopened in 2008 to a limited registration hunt with aquota of 10 moose. As the population has grown, the quota has gone up and in 2016 was increased to 30. The season has never been closed by Emergency Order, and in recent years the quota was not met. The winter hunt was requested by the communities of Goodnews Bay and Platinum to have additional opportunity to harvest moose when the fall harvest was ten moose lower than the quota.

In the two years that the winter hunt has been held, harvest has been low (only five killed in RY2017 and none in RY2018). The population now is over 300 moose and based on the steady growth in moose populations and productivity, ADF&G proposes continued antlerless moose hunts in the Goodnews River Drainage.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

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