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Resident Hunters of Alaska (RHAK)

A Voice for Alaskans! Protecting and Enhancing our Hunting Opportunities!

Proposals 28 & 206
Unit 9 Brown Bear Seasons & Bag Limits

Proposal 28 – Remove the resident bag limit of one brown bear every four years in Unit 9

ADF&G Comments: “Alaska residents who hunt brown bears in Unit 9 do not harvest more than 1 bear in the unit over the span of 2 or 3 decades. During 7 biennial hunts from 2005 to 2017 only 1.1% (38 hunters) of 3,466 successful resident bear hunters reported killing more than 1 bear in Unit 9. Therefore, the proposal would result in no significant increase in bear harvest in Unit 9. **We expect little or no effect of the proposal on guided nonresident hunters.**

The department is **NEUTRAL** on increasing the resident brown bear bag limit, providing that biennial seasons remain. **There are currently no conservation concerns for brown bears in Unit 9”**

Proposal 206 – Open a resident-only early/late season for brown bear in Unit 9

See our Public Comments (PC 135), we have amended our proposal to only include Units 9C, D, & E, to return portions of the spring and fall registration hunt seasons the board removed in 2018 for residents only.

RB XXX - Units 9C, 9D, 9E: October 1-6 Residents Only odd-numbered years

RB XXX – Units 9C, 9D, 9E: May 26-31 Residents Only even-numbered years

Current seasons for units 9C, 9D, & 9E Registration hunts RB 368 & RB 370 for both residents and nonresidents are:

October 7-21 odd-numbered years

May 10-25 even-numbered years

RHAK submitted similar proposal in 2018 (Proposal #132) to adopt a resident-only^{RC 023} spring and fall brown bear season in all of Unit 9, to give residents more opportunity to hunt without competition and conflicts with guided hunters. At the time nonresident guided hunters made up 75% of all hunters and took 75% of the harvest.

RHAK Proposal 132 was amended and passed by the board to “**replace the entirety of the proposal**” to shorten the spring and fall Unit 9 brown bear seasons by one week for all hunters based on conservation concerns from the Department that there were “**significant long term population declines,**” “**noticeably fewer bears on the landscape,**” “**missing cohorts,**” and most of all there was a need to “**protect the sow component.**”

The board stated when passing the amendment that they needed to “**protect the sow component**” and “**let the population recover.**”

Area biologist Dave Crowley stated in 2018 that, regarding sow harvests, that “nonresidents are the female killers” and “kill far more than residents do.” This chart from AB Crowley illustrates resident and nonresident sow harvests in Unit 9 over time for the Unit 9 registration hunts:

In 2017 NR Hunters took 92% of sows

Note that after 2015 NR Hunters started to take higher percentage of sows than residents.

	Nonresidents no. females % females		Residents no. females % females	
1995	109	28.8	45	34.6
1997	121	27.8	41	33.3
1999	166	31.7	53	36.3
2001	156	29.1	48	37.2
2003	143	29.7	54	37.2
2005	153	29.5	35	29.7
2007	139	26.7	39	37.1
2009	142	29	38	35.5
2011	123	25.4	39	32.5
2013	110	26.8	25	29.1
2015	87	23.7	26	30.2
2017	83	23	7	19
2019	46	29	20	26
2020	40	18	8	19
2021	DATA	NOT	AVAILABLE	

2017 – nonresidents make up 84% of hunters and take 89% of the harvest

2019 – outlier (cancellation of nonresident spring 2020 hunt)

2020 – nonresidents make up 83% of hunters and take 88% of the harvest

2021 – nonresidents make up 83% of hunters and take 90% of the harvest

Units 9C, D & E brown bear harvest			
Hunts RB368, 369, 370			RC 023
Hunters and harvest by residency			
Number of hunters			
	Nonresident	Resident	Total hunters
2011	554	158	712
2013	522	135	657
2015	515	144	659
2017	483	77	560
2019	178	115	293
2020	272	46	318
2021	140	24	164
	2664	699	3363
Bear harvest			
	Nonresident	Resident	Total harvest
2011	397	91	488
2013	326	62	388
2015	300	70	370
2017	295	32	327
2019	107	61	168
2020	176	22	198
2021	84	8	92
	1685	346	2031

Department comments in 2018 on the Unit 9 brown bear population: “**Conservation concerns.**” “**Long term population decline.**” “**Cohort loss.**” “**Protecting females job #1**”

Department comments in 2021: “Brown bears are managed for abundance, trophy quality, and subsistence uses in Unit 9, and **they are abundant.**”

“There are currently **no conservation concerns** for brown bears in Unit 9.”

Conflicts in the Field

An Alaska Peninsula nonresident guided brown bear hunt costs upwards of \$30,000

Nonresident guided hunters make up >80% of all hunters

Guide advertisements:

“We utilize up to 12 spike camp locations to put you within walking distance of the best hunting areas.”

“We have four separate camps situated throughout the area, each with a guide and hunter in each camp.”

Ask yourself, with such a lucrative hunt for guides, largest brown bears in the world, guided hunter expectations, and guided hunters making up vast majority of all hunters, how could there not be conflicts?

Conclusion

In 2018 the board shortened the spring and fall seasons by one week for everyone due to conservation concerns caused by nonresident guided hunters, particularly sow harvests.

Resident brown bear hunters should not bear the burden for conservation concerns they were not a part in creating.

Resident brown bear hunters should not have had their seasons shortened.

A 6 day resident-only hunt May 26-31, or October 1-6, would return those seasons to residents and allow a short window whereby residents are able to have a hunting priority in parts of Unit 9, and avoid some of the conflicts and competition.



Board Members
Board Support & ADF&G Staff