

PROPOSAL 23

5 AAC 92.080(4)(B)(vii). Unlawful methods of taking game; exceptions.

Allow the use of snowmachine to position wolf or wolverine for harvest in Unit 17 as follows:

On page 18 of the hunting regulations book, it would read: “A snowmachine may be used to position a wolf or wolverine for harvest, and a wolf or wolverine may be shot from a stationary snowmachine in Units 17, 18, 22, 23, and 26A.”

In 5AAC 92.080(4)(B)(vii) it would read “in Units 17 and 18, a snowmachine may be used to position a wolf or wolverine for harvest, and wolves or wolverines may be shot from a stationary snowmachine;”

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Currently, the restrictions against driving, herding, harassing, or molesting game, in the accepted allowance for the use of snowmachines to position hunters to select individual wolves, and the absence of wolverines in the accepted allowance for snow machine positioning, conflicts with the long standing local, wolf and wolverine hunting practices which is the only practical way to hunt wolves, and wolverines in Unit 17 during the winter. Also, the allowance for snowmachine use to position a hunter does not satisfactorily address this issue, as it does not clarify whether this includes actually tracking down wolves, or wolverine, including pursuing animals, until close enough to shoot. This proposal simply seeks to provide Unit 17 hunters and trappers the same opportunities currently available in Units 18, 22, 23, and 26A.

If the Board of Game does not change the regulation, local people hunting these species with snowmachines will continue to live with the threat of prosecution for hunting with snowmachines in the only way practical, making people feel like criminals and interfering with the ability to freely pursue these animals for critical and irreplaceable fur products and income. These animals are critical to the local economy and way of life and enforcement of current regulations is viewed as insensitive to the culture, economy and food security in the region.

Allowing a hunter to use a snowmachine to get within range of fleeing wolves, and wolverines will allow the precise shot placement which will minimize unnecessary waste of fur and is the most humane method of killing an animal with a rifle. Wildlife enforcement officers will also have a clear understanding of the intent to allow for the pursuit of these species, reducing unnecessary conflicts and increasing the cooperation of the people on the other enforcement issues where local cooperation is necessary to the mission to protect all species in the areas.

The local people will appreciate the Board of Game and the Department of Fish and Game being responsive to the needs of the people and by correcting this issue will put integrity back in the system by getting rid of a longstanding conflict between regulatory prohibitions and common local practices that are the only practical way to pursue these species in the winter. In addition, the future cooperative management strategies and goals will be more likely to succeed as the people will have increased faith that the system takes their needs into account and is responsive to them.

PROPOSED BY: Nushagak Fish and Game Advisory Committee (HQ-F20-031)
