

PROPOSAL 11

5 AAC 85.020. Hunting seasons and bag limits for brown bear.

Shorten the spring and fall brown bear hunting seasons in Unit 9C by one week for residents and nonresidents as follows:

I request that the Board of Game shorten the brown bear hunting season by one week (back to its previous length) in both the spring and the fall for Unit 9C, re-establishing the season as October 7–21 and May 10–25 respectively.

Shortening the season allows for the last of the other user groups to exit the popular rivers and lakes where hunting takes place.

In the Department of Fish and Game’s 2022 comments, they wrote that “The department and Board of Game have for decades supported short seasons and reduced bag limits for nonresident and resident hunters in Unit 9 for bear conservation and hunt quality. The management objective for bears in all of Unit 9 is to maintain a high bear density with a sex and age structure that will sustain a harvest composed of 60% males, with 50 males 8 years or older taken during the combined fall and spring seasons. “

Also, at issue is whether it is ethical to sport hunt animals that are habituated to humans. The bears hunted on Moraine, Funnel and Kulik Rivers are known worldwide. Photographers, film crews and other visitors pay thousands of dollars a day to view and photograph these bears. They are used to the presence of humans: sows will nurse their cubs next to fishermen and wildlife viewers. Many of the bears are known individually by guides and visitors alike. Much of the visiting public is unaware that these bears will be hunted later in the season.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? In 2022, the Board of Game adopted a proposal to increase brown bear fall and spring seasons in Unit 19C by one week each, allowing hunters to hunt earlier in the fall and later spring. In the passing of that proposal, the board extended the brown bear seasons to October 1-21 and May 10-31.

In the 35 years I’ve lived in Alaska I have worked as a resource manager for three different land management agencies, including Alaska State Parks. For 16 of those years, I was a law enforcement officer; part of my job was dealing with user conflicts, human-wildlife conflicts, enforcing Alaska game regulations and public safety. What I observed with this early season hunt was the potential for major user conflicts and public safety issues.

- **User conflicts-** Several operators were still dropping off sport fisherman and wildlife viewers on rivers where bear hunting was taking place. Hunting camps and hunters were occupying critical habitat where bears were fishing, forcing other users to avoid these areas.
- **Public Safety-** Bears were being shot right at the outlet of the Kulik River. The Kulik Lodge still has employees breaking down camp, there were several groups of sport fisherman on the river as well as wildlife viewers. A bear had cached a hunter shot carcass right at the outlet of the Kulik River where aircraft picked up sportfisherman and other visitors.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local fish and game advisory committee? I have discussed addressing this early season hunt with other guides and businesses that use this area for sport fishing and bear viewing. I am a member of Katmai Service providers.

PROPOSED BY: Jennifer Culbertson

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