

## **PROPOSAL 34**

### **5 AAC 92.085 Unlawful methods for taking big game.**

Allow the same day airborne take of brown bear in Unit 17 as follows:

### **5 AAC 92.085 Unlawful methods for taking big game; exceptions.**

17 Brown Bear.

Resident Hunters: You may hunt brown bear in Unit 17 from Aug. 20-May 31 the same day you have flown, provided you are at least 300 feet from the airplane.

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** I'm writing this proposal to ask the board to adopt same day airborne hunting of brown bears for residents in Unit 17. Since 2017 Bristol Bay has seen record high returns of sockeye salmon. One can infer that due to record sockeye returns the Bristol Bay bear population has likely increased with higher productivity and higher survival due to the increased sockeye salmon abundance, the bears primary food resource.

ADFG's Unit 17 Brown Bear Species Management Report states a management objective of at least 50 bears harvested annually, with no more than 50% of the harvest comprising of females. This harvest objective has been met since at least 2011, possibly longer. This means even though harvest methods are being met, Unit 17 still has a significant abundance of brown bears. Harvest is largely driven by guided non-resident hunters, and steps have been taken to liberalize harvest and increase the take of brown bears over the last three Region 4 board cycles.

Very few individuals harvest two bears in a single season. 2022- 6 2021- 5 2020- 2 2019- 3 2018- 3.

Even with the liberalization of harvest, and the sale of hides being legal resident harvest and interest still remains low. Same day airborne is a method in which more residents are likely to participate in, particularly in the spring which really drives harvest rates (two graphs below should help show this), but fall harvest has been on a generally increasing trend the last five years. Fall harvest in Unit 17 is relatively stable due to a high proportion of moose hunters on guided combination hunts for both bears and moose. Same day airborne is already a method used across the state for other big game species (black bears, 16, deer Statewide).

In the spring of 2023 ADF&G implemented a removal project using fix wing aircraft as well as a helicopter. This costs the state hundreds of thousands of dollars in resources and staffing. Residents would be able to harvest more bears if they were able to hunt them same day airborne and alleviate some of the workload that is put on the state for removing bears in Unit 17.

The use of same day airborne means would likely increase bear harvest within the Greater Mulchatana Predator Control Area, and may help increase both caribou and moose populations due to:

- Eight years of MCH calf mortality study that determined brown bears were the leading cause of caribou calf mortality

- Three-year Unit 17B/C calf mortality study where all 23 mortalities (of 49 collared moose calves) were attributed to brown bear predation.

**Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local fish and game advisory committee?** No, I developed this proposal myself.

**PROPOSED BY:** Adam Grenda

(EG-F24-060)

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