

Dillingham Area – Unit 17

PROPOSAL 25

5 AAC 85.045. Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

Increase the number of moose drawing permits issued to nonresidents for Unit 17A as follows:

Allow for more nonresident draw tags to be issued. The management plans allows for a maximum of 50 nonresident tags. In 2023 only **six** moose were harvested from 20 tags issued in Unit 17A. With a healthy population that is 50% over the recommended population, allowing for another 30 tags would likely result in less than 10 more moose being harvested.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? ADF&G surveys in Unit 17A have identified an estimated 1,200 moose. Eight hundred moose is what the Department of Fish and Game has deemed to be the ideal highest population of moose in that area.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local fish and game advisory committee? This has been a proposal I have come up with.

PROPOSED BY: Gabriel Davis (EG-FF24-041)

PROPOSAL 26

5 AAC 85.045. Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

Lengthen the nonresident, fall moose hunt in Unit 17A as follows:

Allow nonresident hunting from September 1-20. The moose surveys have showed 1200 moose in an area that 800 animals was the top to the target range, according to the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge representative.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? An eleven-day hunting season in Unit 17A.

Did you develop your proposal with others, or with your local fish and game advisory committee? Developed proposal myself.

PROPOSED BY: Gabriel Davis (EG-F24-043)

PROPOSAL 27

5 AAC 85.045(a)(15). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

Reauthorize the antlerless moose season in Unit 17A as follows:

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
(15)		
Unit 17(A)		
Up to 2 moose per regulatory year only as follows:		
RESIDENT HUNTERS:		
1 moose by registration permit only; or	Aug. 25–Sept. 25 (Subsistence hunt only)	
...		
1 antlerless moose by registration permit only;	Jan. 1 – last day of Feb. (Subsistence hunt only)	
....		

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Antlerless moose hunts must be reauthorized annually by the board. The goal is to provide for a wide range of public uses and benefits, and to protect the health and habitat of moose populations. Antlerless hunts are important for improving or maintaining the ability of moose habitat to support current populations. They also help regulate moose population growth, help to meet Intensive Management (IM) objectives for high levels of harvest, and provide subsistence hunters with the opportunity to pursue moose for subsistence uses without reducing bull-to-cow ratios. The board adopted an antlerless moose hunt in 2013 after hearing many comments from heavily invested groups such as the Bristol Bay Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Council, the Nushagak and Togiak Fish and Game Advisory Committees, and the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge.

The Unit 17A moose management plan calls for antlerless moose hunting opportunity when the population is above 600 moose and increasing. When the population exceeds 1,200 moose, a bag limit of up to two moose is needed to provide increased opportunity and to reduce moose abundance to protect habitat. Based on the most recent survey in October 2022, the population

estimate was 1,967 ±358 moose. After further analyses, this estimate will be corrected for sightability which will result in a higher population estimate further supporting liberal harvest strategies. The bag limit of two moose and antlerless harvest opportunity provide a mechanism to limit population growth and allow hunters to harvest surplus animals.

The moose population in subunit 17A is over objective and can sustain additional harvest; however, the objectives for this population include allowing it to expand into neighboring areas to provide additional harvest opportunities. This population is currently contributing to the growth of adjacent moose populations, especially to the north and west.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local fish and game advisory committee?

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F24-063)

PROPOSAL 28

5 AAC 92.108. Identified big game prey populations and objectives.

Reduce population and harvest objectives for moose in Unit 17B as follows:

Population	Finding	Population Objective	Harvest Objective
...			
Moose			
...			
GMU 17B	Positive	<u>2,800–3,500</u> [4,900-6,000]	<u>100–250</u> [200-400]
....			

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Current population objectives for moose in Unit 17B have never been met and harvest objectives have rarely been met. Robust moose population surveys across the Unit have been conducted by the department six times since 2000 but are challenging to complete due to the distance from Dillingham and poor survey conditions. Unit 17B is split into two survey units, 17B-West comprised of the Tikchik and upper Nushagak River watersheds, and 17B-East comprised of the Mulchatna watershed. Between 2000 and 2009, 17B-West was surveyed three times with an average population estimate of 1,183 (range of 1,137–1,210); 17B-East was surveyed twice with an average population estimate of 1,709 (range 1,466–1,953). Ideally, survey units are completed in consecutive years which occurred in 2000 and 2001 and 2008 and 2009. The combined estimates from 2000 and 2001 resulted in 3,155 moose, and from 2008 and 2009 resulted in an estimated combined 2,603 moose. Neighboring Unit 17C has similar moose habitat quality and quantity (~ 5,450 mi² moose habitat), a defined objective of 0.5 moose/mi² (~5,800 mi²), and a population objective of 2,800–3,500. Unit 17B population estimates from the robust surveys have never been documented within the existing lower population management objective of 4,900, nor the upper objective at 6,000.

Table 28-1. Unit 17B moose population estimates, regulatory year (RY) 2000–2009

Year	17B-West	17B-East	Total Estimate
2000	1,202	-*	
2001	-*	1,953	3,155
2005	1,210	-*	
2008	-*	1,466	
2009	1,137	-*	2,603

*Survey not completed.

The reported annual harvest for Unit 17B over the last 40 years demonstrates that the minimum harvest objective has only been achieved in two independent years. The current harvest objectives for Unit 17B are not attainable due to a lack of resident hunter participation within the subunit and difficult access for nonlocal resident and nonresident hunters. The proposed new harvest objective for Unit 17B is 100–250 moose, which includes the 40-year average harvest of 121 moose, and also reflects the most recent harvest levels.

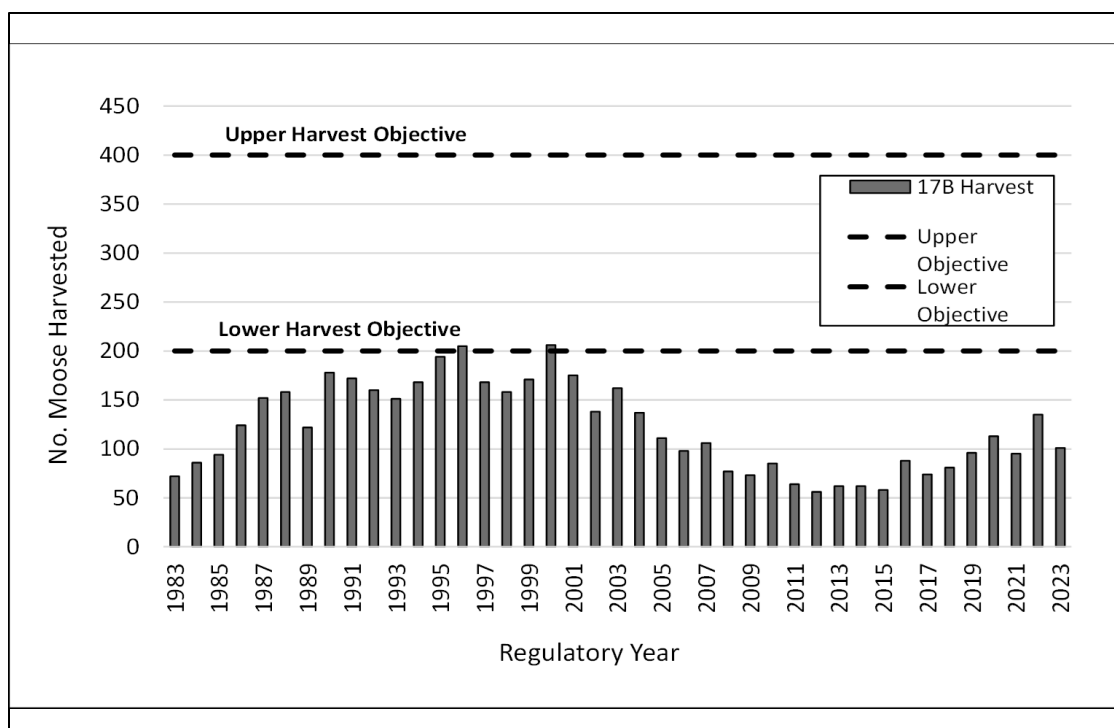


Figure 28-1. Unit 17B moose harvest RY1983–2023

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local fish and game advisory committee?

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F24-077)

PROPOSAL 29

5 AAC 92.108. Identified big game prey populations and objectives.

Review the population and harvest objectives for the Mulchatna caribou herd as follows:

I recommend establishing new population and harvest objectives after a habitat assessment has been performed to determine the current ecological potential of the range to support caribou. Further, I recommend consideration of recent population and distribution data collected by state and federal Mulchatna caribou herd (MCH) managers that suggest that there are multiple, independent caribou populations within the designated range of the MCH.

Caribou Herds, Population Finding Population Harvest

Adak Negative

Beaver Mountain Negative

Central Arctic Positive 28,000 - 32,000 1,400 - 1,600

Chisana Negative

Delta Negative Denali Negative

Farewell/Big River Negative

Fortymile Positive 50,000 - 100,000 1,000 - 15,000

Galena Mountain Negative

Kenai Lowlands Negative

Kenai Mountains Negative

Killey River, Fox River, and Twin Lakes Negative

Macomb Positive 600 - 800 30 - 50

Mentasta Negative

Mulchatna Positive To be determined [30,000 – 80,000 2,400 – 8,000]

Nelchina Positive 35,000 - 40,000 3,000 - 6,000

Northern Alaska Peninsula Positive 6,000 - 15,000 600 - 1,500

Nushagak Peninsula Negative

Porcupine Positive 100,000 - 150,000 1,500 - 2,000

Rainy Pass Negative

Ray Mountain Negative

Southern Alaska Peninsula Positive 1,500 - 4,000 150 - 200

Sunshine Mountain Negative

Teshkepuk Positive 15,000 - 28,000 900 - 2,800

Tonzona Negative

Unimak Island

Western Arctic Positive at least 200,000 12,000 - 20,000

White Mountain Negative

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Mulchatna caribou herd has changed continuously from the time monitoring began, increasing from an estimated 14,000 in 1974 to 200,000 in 1996, then decreasing to ~12,000 currently. A population objective of 25,000 was initially established in 1987, and since then revised multiple times. The current population objective (30,000-80,000) was established in 2008 at which point the population was estimated to be 30,000. This objective has been achieved only once since then. The multiple revisions in objectives over time have been a sensible approach to management of a changing resource. I request that the Board of Game review the Intensive Management population and harvest objectives with the goal of adjusting objectives to an ecologically sustainable level. I recommend this review include consideration of habitat quality, which almost certainly has changed in response to caribou grazing, reducing population potential.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local fish and game advisory committee? I have discussed this concept with local federal and state MCH managers but am submitting the proposal individually.

PROPOSED BY: Patrick Walsh (EG-F24-090)

PROPOSAL 30

5 AAC 85.025. Hunting seasons and bag limits for caribou.

Implement a three-year moratorium on caribou hunting in Units 17 and 19 as follows:

Mulchatna caribou herd implements a three-year moratorium in the following Units: 9B, 17, 19A, and 19B in conjunction with the three-year moratorium in Unit 18.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Due to the continued decline of the Mulchatna caribou herd, all efforts to rebuild the population is vital. Implementing a three-year moratorium on the herd in the following Units: 9B, 17, 19A, and 19B is necessary to ensure that there will be no hunting as "Every Caribou Counts." With active efforts on both state and federal management doing everything we can to ensure that rebuilding the caribou population is vital.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local fish and game advisory committee? After submitting a Federal Special Action Request (SAR) to close hunting on the Mulchatna caribou herd. Office of Subsistence management Wildlife Supervisor, Yukon Kuskokwim Delta Regional Advisory Council Coordinator, and I met on 4/11/2024 at 10AM to discuss in depth the SAR. During our discussion it resulted in the following actions that needed to take place. Implement a moratorium on the full range of the Mulchatna caribou herd's migratory areas. This will provide clarity that there is no open hunting season on the full range of the Mulchatna caribou herd. That we civilians, managers, and both state and feds are working together

to rebuild the caribou population. As the herd is still declining in numbers, we want to ensure that hunting remains closed until we meet or exceed the threshold.

PROPOSED BY: Alissa Nadine Rogers (EG-F24-017)

PROPOSAL 31

5AAC 85.025. Hunting seasons and bag limits for caribou.

Close the resident caribou season in Units 9B, 17 and 19 as follows.

Units 9B, 19A, 19B, 17A, 17B, 17C: Change the Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunt) from 19: (August 10- September 30) change to (No open season). 17: (August 1- March 31) change to (No open season).

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? For the security and protection that "Every Caribou Counts" on the Mulchatna caribou herd. The following changes need to be addressed to ensure hunting on the full range of the caribou migratory range continues to be closed until the population numbers have met or exceeded the 30,000 threshold to harvest.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local fish and game advisory committee? After submitting a Federal Special Action Request (SAR) to close hunting on the Mulchatna caribou herd. Office of Subsistence Management Wildlife Supervisor, Yukon Kuskokwim Delta Regional Advisory Council Coordinator, and I met on 4/11/2024 at 10AM to discuss in depth the SAR. During our discussion it resulted in the following actions that needed to take place. Change state regulations to open season to No open Season. This will provide clarity that there is no open hunting season on the full range of the Mulchatna caribou herd. That we civilians, managers, and both State & Feds are working together to rebuild the caribou population. As the herd is still declining in numbers, we want to ensure that hunting remains closed until we meet or exceed the threshold.

PROPOSED BY: Alissa Nadine Rogers (EG-F24-016)

PROPOSAL 32

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

Allow the year-round take of brown bear in Unit 17 as follows:

Allow year-round harvest of bears in Unit 17. Legal harvest still requires sealing and reporting of bears but it is far less onerous on the harvester. Less burden on the shooters will encourage more complete reporting and better data for management needs.

Specifically: in Unit 17

Resident Open Season	Nonresident Open Season
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Units and Bag Limits	(Subsistence and General Hunts)	
(15)		
Unit 17		
2 bears every regulatory year by registration permit only	<u>No closed season</u> [AUG. 20 – MAY 31] (Subsistence only)	No open seasons.
2 bears every regulatory year	<u>No closed season</u> [AUG. 20 – MAY 31]	<u>No closed season</u> [AUG. 20 – MAY 31]

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Quite a few bears are shot in the "off season" in Unit 17 and not reported or sealed. Most of these might be considered defense of life and property (DLP) bears. However, people are generally subsistence fishing and conflict between bears and subsistence users prevent individuals from coming into Dillingham during this important season. The DLP process is extremely onerous and inconvenient, especially for those who live outside of hub communities. In other cases, the shooters fear prosecution or investigation and suspicion while just trying to put up fish, and gather food for the rest of the year. Therefore, shot bears are commonly disposed of without contacting ADF&G or wildlife troopers. There is a strong desire in many villages for reduction in bear numbers, especially in close proximity to their communities and subsistence sites. With a number of guides working in the unit, and with the intensive management program in the unit, there is a strong management need for ADF&G to have better bear harvest data.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local fish and game advisory committee? Partially, I tried to bring up the concept at the recent Nushagak Advisory Committee meeting but since development of proposals was not advertised or on the agenda, I was only allowed to briefly mention my idea. I was advised to submit a proposal and the advisory committee could review once it's in the proposal book. However, I did discuss this with area biologist who helped me with wording.

PROPOSED BY: Dan Dunaway (HQ-F24-032)

Note: The Board of Game can only allow the take of wolf same day airborne under a predator control plan for which a permit is required.

PROPOSAL 33

5 AAC 92.085 Unlawful methods for taking big game.

Allow same day airborne take of brown bear and wolves Unit 17 as follows:

Allow same day airborne hunting of brown bear and wolves Unit 17.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Increased liberalization of bag limits: continually meeting the harvest goals of brown bear annually warrant increased means and methods.

Record salmon returns since 2017 have likely increased bear survival and productivity.

Same day airborne would facilitate increased harvest especially in a predator control zone / area.

No conservation concerns for brown bears relatively minimal harvest primarily by nonresidents.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local fish and game advisory committee?

PROPOSED BY: Dennis Williams (HQ-F24-012)

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)

Note: Trapping wolverine in Game Management Unit 18 is outside the scope of the Central Southwest Region meeting.

PROPOSAL 35

5 AAC 84.270. Furbearer trapping.

Shorten the trapping seasons for wolverine in Units 9 and 17, to the last day of February as follows:

Return the wolverine seasons in Units 9B, 17 and 18 to November 10 - last day in February.

Section 5 AAC 84.270. Furbearer trapping.

Trapping seasons and bag limits for furbearers are as follows:

(14) Wolverine

Units 1 - 5	Nov. 10 - Last day of Feb.	No limit.
Units 6, 7, 9(A), 9(C), 9(D), 9(E), 11, 15, and 16(B)	Nov. 10 - Last day of Feb.	No limit.
Unit 9(B)	Nov. 10 - <u>last day of Feb.</u> [MAR. 31]	No limit.

Unit 10	No open season	
Unit 13	Nov. 10 - Feb. 15	No limit.
Unit 14(A)	Dec. 15 - Jan. 31	2 per season
Units 14(B), 14(C), and 16(A)	Nov. 10 - Jan. 31	2 per season
Units 20(A), 20(B), 20(C) east of the Toklat River, 20(D), 20(F), and 25(C)	Nov. 1 - Last day of Feb.	No limit.
Units 12 and 20(E)	Nov. 1 - Mar. 15	No limit.
Units 17 and 18	Nov. 10 – <u>last day of Feb.</u> [MAR. 31]	No limit.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The trapping season for wolverine in southwest Alaska extends into the denning period in March. If a female wolverine is trapped or shot during March, she may already have kits in the den. Changing this regulation would also maintain consistency across Unit 9 and 17 and 18 with similar habitat, terrain and latitude.

What will happen if nothing is done? Trappers will continue to trap and shoot wolverines into their denning period causing some newborns to die in the den.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? This has been a topic of conversation in the area since the wolverine seasons was extended from the end of February to March 31 over 10 years ago. I have received input from other residents and trappers who the killing of female wolverines during the season is this extended trapping season is unethical.

PROPOSED BY: Rick Grant (EG-F24-052)

PROPOSAL 36

5 AAC 85.057 Hunting seasons and bag limits for wolverine.

Shorten the hunting season for wolverine in Unit 17 as follows:

Change the wolverine hunting season in Game Management Unit 17 to September 1 - February 29.

Section 5 AAC 85.057 - Hunting seasons and bag limits for wolverine

(a) In this section the phrase "General hunt only" means that there is a general hunt for residents, but no subsistence hunt during the relevant open season. Hunting seasons and bag limits for wolverine are also as follows: **Resident Open Season (Subsistence and Nonresident Units and Bag Limits General Hunts) Open Season** Units 1 - 5, and 13 Sept. 1 - Feb. 15 Sept. 1 - Feb. 15 (General hunt only) 1 wolverine Units 6 - 9, 12, 15, 16(B), Sept. 1 - Mar. 31 **Sept. 1 - Feb. 29**

Unit 17 1 wolverine, Sept. 1 - Mar. 31 [17, AND] 19 - 25, and 26(A) 1 wolverine Unit 10 No open season. No open season. Units 11, 14, and 16(A) Sept. 1 - Jan. 31 Sept. 1 - Jan. 31 1 wolverine Unit 18 Sept. 1 - Mar. 31 Sept. 1 - Mar. 31 (General hunt only) 2 wolverine Units 26(8) and 26(C) Aug. 20-Mar. 31 Aug. 20-Mar. 31

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The hunting season for wolverine in southwest Alaska extends into the denning period. If a female wolverine is hunted and killed during March, she may already have kits in the den.

What will happen if nothing is done? Hunters will continue to be able to shoot wolverines into their denning period causing some newborns to be abandoned and die in the den.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? This has been a topic of conversation in the area since the hunting and

trapping season for wolverine were extended from the end of February to March 31, over 10 years ago. I have received input from other residents who agree killing female wolverines during their denning period is unethical.

PROPOSED BY: Rick Grant (EG-F24-086)

PROPOSAL 37

5 AAC 84.270 Furbearer trapping.

Remove the two per day bag limit for beaver when taken by firearm and allow the use of firearm from October 10 – May 31 in Unit 17 as follows:

Species and Units	Open Season	Bag Limit
(1) Beaver		
Unit 17[, FIREARMS OR BOW AND ARROW MAY BE USED TO TAKE BEAVER FROM DEC. 1–APR. 14, AND FIREARMS MAY BE USED TO TAKE UP TO 2 BEAVER PER DAY FROM APR. 15—MAY 31]	Oct 10 – May 31	No limit.

....

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Unit 17 currently has no limit for beaver under trapping regulations and no open season under hunting regulations. The current regulation is prohibitive when there is no limit via trapping. Beaver populations are doing well and are found in the majority of drainages where there is suitable habitat in Unit 17. The harvest trend

has been decreasing since its peak in 2005 primarily due to decreased trapper numbers in Bristol Bay, lower demand for fur, decreasing fur prices, and decreased trapper incentive (Figure 37.1).

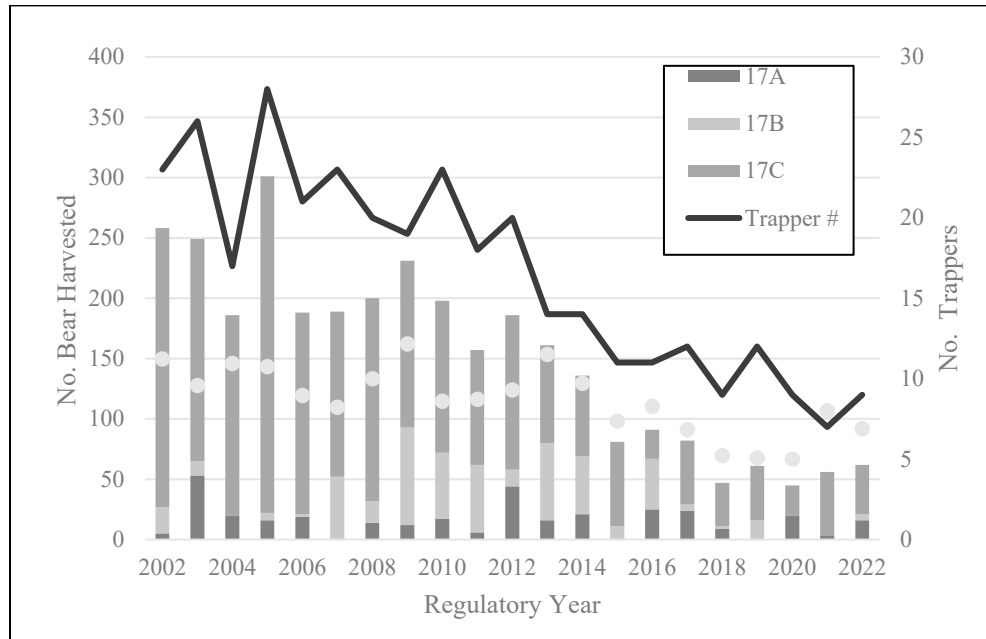


Figure 37-1. Beaver harvest through trapping and hunting in Unit 17, RY2002–2022.

There are currently no conservation concerns for beaver in Unit 17 and allowing increased methods of take and aligning season dates for take with firearm with the trapping season should reduce regulatory confusion, and aid those who subsist on fall beaver for meat and spring beaver for their fur.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local fish and game advisory committee?

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F24-065)

PROPOSAL 38

5 AAC 92.066. Permit for access to Walrus Island State Game Sanctuary.

Lengthen the permit dates to access Walrus Island State Game Sanctuary for hunting as follows.

5 AAC 92.006 (4) an access permit for hunting may be issued under the conditions specified by the department on a case-by-case basis, subject to the application procedures and rules set out in (1) and (2) of this section, to hunting parties for the period of ~~September 10 – October 20~~ **September 5 - October 20** only;

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Extend the hunting period from ~~Sept 10th – October 20th~~ to **September 5th – October 20th**.

Background:

A.) Dates were chosen based off how harvesting was done by our ancestors. Now that we have new technology and just about every household has freezers to store their subsistence, preservation is no longer an issue.

B.) Weather is becoming more of a challenge, with climate change, weather patterns are more severe into the Fall season.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local fish and game advisory committee? The proposal was developed by the Qayassiq Walrus Commission working with ADF&G and USF&WS.

PROPOSED BY: Qayassiq Walrus Commission (EG-F24-012)
