

STATE OF ALASKA

SARAH PALIN, GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

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TO: Alaska Board of Game Members
THRU: Kristy Tibbles, Executive Director, Boards Support
FROM: Kim Titus, Deputy Director, Wildlife Conservation *DKT*
Marianne See, Assistant Director, Subsistence *M. See/KT*
DATE: January 26, 2009
SUBJECT: Emergency Petition – Unit 9E – Extend moose season until 15 February

The divisions of Wildlife Conservation and Subsistence have reviewed the petition from eleven Ugashik Village residents to extend the winter moose hunting season in Unit 9E until 15 February.

Reasons for the need for emergency action cited:

- residents are having difficulty subsistence moose hunting due to severe weather conditions,
- no moose have been taken by the village residents,
- caribou are not available as the hunt is closed,
- fuel and energy costs are high.

Over the past few years various residents and groups have petitioned the board requesting an extended winter moose season for various reasons, including the high cost of fuel.

We are confident that the Board will carefully consider the definition of an “emergency” as described in the Joint Board Petition Policy in 5 AAC 96.625(f). The joint board petition policy defines an emergency as “an unforeseen, unexpected resource situation where a biologically allowable resource harvest would be precluded by delayed regulatory action and such delay would be significantly burdensome to the petitioners because the resource would be unavailable in the future.”

There are a several different moose hunting seasons within GMU 9E that are relevant to the petition.

- Resident general season hunt Sept 10-20, Spike/Fork, 50 inch or 3 brow tine
- Resident general season hunt, Dec 1-Jan 20, any bull
- Rural residents of Unit 9E under federal regulations Aug. 20-Sept. 20, one bull,
- Rural residents of Unit 9E under federal regulations Dec. 1-Jan. 31, one antlered bull,

Caribou hunting is allowed only by Tier II permit and permits have not been issued for the last few years. There is also no federal open season in the area.

Household harvest surveys - Based on Subsistence Division household harvest surveys in 1987, 1994, 1995 and 1996, this community relied heavily in the past on the harvest of caribou from the Northern Peninsula herd. In 1996, 100% of households used caribou (435 lbs per capita) compared with 50% of households relying upon moose (54 lbs per capita) By the year 2000, the caribou hunt became a Tier II hunt, and has been closed for the past 4 years. Although more recent household surveys have not been done, it is likely that reliance upon moose meat has increased in recent years. Other alternatives to caribou are limited by the remote location, relatively high cost of fuel, and high cost of imported foods.

Recent moose harvest - Regarding the status of this year's moose hunt, since the season just ended there is no harvest information on the resident general hunt. For previous years, an average harvest of 7.1 moose have been reported annually from 2000 to 2007 by local residents of GMU 9E.

The department does not support the petition to extend the moose season for biological and moose management reasons. The moose population in the area is low and stable and a late winter harvest of additional animals, some of which might be cows, is not warranted. The current regulatory year has provided 82 days of hunting opportunity under the combined state and federal seasons, and the federal season remains open until the end of January.

The department acknowledges the concerns of local residents who desire the opportunity to hunt and harvest moose under difficult local circumstances. The Board will have to weigh the other factors such as the cost of energy and fuel in determining if an emergency exists that warrants an extended moose season, keeping in mind that these costs are high across the entire state.