

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

STAFF COMMENTS
ARCTIC AND WESTERN REGION REGULATORY PROPOSALS

ALASKA BOARD OF GAME MEETING
KOTZEBUE, ALASKA

JANUARY 10-13, 2014



The following staff comments were prepared by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game for use at the Alaska Board of Game meeting, January 10-13, 2014 in Kotzebue, Alaska, and are prepared to assist the public and board. The stated staff comments should be considered preliminary and subject to change, if or when new information becomes available. Final department positions will be formulated after review of written and oral testimony presented to the board.

PROPOSAL 1 – 5 AAC 85.045. Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

PROPOSED BY: Myron Naneng Sr., Association of Village Council Presidents.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal modifies the boundary and increases the size of the Unit 18 Lower Yukon Area for moose hunting. The new boundary uses the Kashunuk River, Driftwood Slough and Pitkas Point as landmarks to define the boundary that separates the Lower Yukon Area from the Remainder of Unit 18. The new areas added to the Lower Yukon Area would have a lengthened season and more liberal bag limit compared to the Remainder of Unit 18.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The current hunt area boundary is defined in 85.045 (a) (16) as:

Unit 18, Lower Yukon Area, that portion north and west of the Kashunuk River including the north bank from the mouth of the river upstream to the old village of Chakaktolik, west of a line from Chakaktolik to Mountain Village, and excluding all Yukon River drainages upriver from Mountain Village.

The moose seasons and bag limits in the Lower Yukon Area and Remainder of Unit 18 are:

<u>Units and Bag Limits</u>	<u>Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)</u>	<u>Nonresident Open Season</u>
Unit 18, Lower Yukon Area ...		
RESIDENT HUNTERS:		
2 moose of which only 1 may be an antlered bull; a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf; or	Aug. 1 - Sept. 30	
2 antlerless moose	Oct. 1 - Last Day of Feb.	
NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:		
1 antlered bull;		Sept. 1 - Sept. 30
Remainder of Unit 18		
1 antlered bull; or	Aug. 10 - Sept. 30	Sept. 1 - Sept. 30
1 moose	Dec. 20 - Last Day of Feb.	No open season.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal would change the boundary between two moose hunt areas in Unit 18 by following a new route that buffers the Kashunuk River zone and has a route that extends more easterly to the Yukon River than the current boundary. The proposed line adds new areas into the Lower Yukon Area, as follows:

- 1) South of the Yukon River
 - a. an expanded Kashunuk River zone using a buffer zone that includes an area ½ mile south of the route to the Yukon River, and
 - b. approximately 150 mi² of new area (located east of the line between Chakaktolik and Mountain Village).
- 2) North of the Yukon River
 - a. include all drainages downstream of Pitkas Point.

The moose season and bag limit for the newly defined hunt area would be the same as the season and bag limit currently assigned to the Lower Yukon Area. This means that the pieces that would be added to expand the hunt area would have a season lengthened by 81 days (Aug. 1-Last day of February) and a bag limit of two moose, only one of which may be an antlered bull and antlered bulls may only be harvested between August 1 and September 30. The proposal is not clear concerning the taking of calves and cows accompanied by calves. Unless the board takes action, the bag limit in the new area would be the same as currently found in the rest of the Lower Yukon Area.

BACKGROUND: The Lower Yukon Area is also referred to as “the area below Mountain Village” along the Yukon River drainage and has been defined in at least three different ways in the past decade. The area affected by the proposal is mostly flat tundra with some ribbons of riparian vegetation near the Yukon River, and includes several sloughs and creeks. Landmarks are difficult to distinguish, and ones that are good for winter travel and hunting may not be good during the fall hunting season. The department worked with local residents to define the current hunt area boundary as a way to separate the Lower Yukon Area from other portions of Unit 18.

Moose populations in this portion of Unit 18 have increased to all-time high levels. In the area affected by this proposal there is an estimated minimum population of 12,000 moose. Reported harvest in the past three years has been an average of 328 bulls and 108 cows. Harvests have been stable in the past five years despite increased season length and liberalized bag limits in RY2010.

Increases in harvest through more liberal seasons and bag limits would be confined to a small area and are sustainable by the moose population in the Lower Yukon Area.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. The Department does not have any conservation concerns. This proposal is by local residents who favor changing to a new boundary because it will be easier to identify in the fall, when most of the moose hunting occurs. The half-mile buffer zone along the Kashunuk River to Driftwood Slough will be difficult to determine. If adopted the board needs to clarify its intent regarding the taking of calves and cows accompanied by calves.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to private parties. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 2 – 5 AAC 85.045. Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

PROPOSED BY: Lower Yukon Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? The proposal attempts to define a new hunt area boundary in the Yukon River portion of Unit 18. In the areas affected by the boundary change, resident seasons would be lengthened and bag limits would be liberalized.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There are two hunt areas in the portion of Unit 18 affected by this proposal. The Lower Yukon Area has an exact hunt area description and liberal seasons/bag limits. The Remainder of Unit 18 is an adjoining area with shorter seasons and reduced bag limits that excludes the portions of Unit 18 described as Kuskokwim Area, Eek River area, Goodnews River area, and the Lower Yukon Area. The current regulations are:

<u>Units and Bag Limits</u>	<u>Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)</u>	<u>Nonresident Open Season</u>
Unit 18, Lower Yukon Area, that portion north and west of the Kashunuk River including the north bank from the mouth of the river upstream to the old village of Chakaktolik, west of a line from Chakaktolik to Mountain Village, and excluding all Yukon River drainages upriver from Mountain Village:		
RESIDENT HUNTERS:		
2 moose of which only 1 may be an antlered bull; a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf; or	Aug. 1 - Sept. 30	
2 antlerless moose	Oct. 1 - Last Day of Feb.	
NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:		
1 antlered bull;		Sept. 1 - Sept. 30
Remainder of Unit 18		
1 antlered bull; or	Aug. 10 - Sept. 30	Sept. 1 - Sept. 30
1 moose	Dec. 20 - Last Day of Feb.	No open season.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal would create a new boundary separating the Unit 18 Lower Yukon Area from the Remainder of Unit 18. The seasons and bag limits for resident hunters would be changed; there would be no changes for nonresident hunters.

Hunt Area Change. The proposal uses new landmarks to create a new hunt area in the lower Yukon River drainage; however, as written it is difficult to determine the routing over broad distances with minimal descriptions of the intended boundary. The proposed line from Cape Romanzof to Kuzilvak Mountain to Mountain Village is easy to interpret; however, routing this line to extend approximately 120 miles eastward to Paimiut (located on the Yukon River) would be difficult to determine. In the zone between Mountain Village and Paimiut, the proposal includes generalized descriptions of the Andreefsky area on

the north side of the Yukon River and the Kashunuk area on the south side of the Yukon River. At Paimiut, all drainages of the Yukon River upstream of Paimiut would be excluded from the new hunt area, as that area is in Unit 21.

Discussions with the Lower Yukon Fish and Game Advisory Committee have suggested that the proposed boundary would be along the Kashunuk River extended to the Yukon River via Driftwood Slough, then routed along the north bank of the Yukon River to Pitkas Pt., then extended northward to join the existing boundary that excludes all upstream drainages on the north bank of the Yukon River. This routing uses parts of the existing boundary except for the areas between Chakaktolik and Pitkas Pt. The new line east of Chakaktolik would add land to the Lower Yukon Area.

Season and Bag Limit Change. Compared to the current regulations, the proposal seems to rename the affected hunt areas and apply the existing seasons and bag limits to the newly named areas. The new naming reverses the resident season and bag limit when compared to current regulations. The newly defined Remainder of Unit 18 would have the resident season lengthened by 81 days and the bag limit would change from one to two moose, with antlerless moose available to harvest in the fall. This is very similar to the current season in the Lower Yukon Area.

The other portion of Unit 18 affected by the proposal (i.e., the portion not within the Remainder of Unit 18) would have a resident season of August 10 – February 28 and a bag limit of 1 antlered bull. This is very similar to the current season in the Remainder of Unit 18.

BACKGROUND: Moose populations in this portion of Unit 18 have increased to all-time high levels reaching an estimated minimum population of 12,000 moose. In all areas surveyed, moose populations are increasing with high twinning rates (at or above 40%) and calf to adult ratios that are 37:100 and 36:100. Reported harvest in the past three years has been an average of 328 bulls and 108 cows. Harvests have been stable in the past five years despite increased season length and liberalized bag limits in RY2010.

The Remainder of Unit 18 has under-utilized moose habitat and a growing moose population. Based on counts in 2012 and 2013, the population is estimated at above 8,000 moose, with calf:cow ratios of 37:100 and 36:100, respectively. The twinning rate in this area is estimated at 50% and anecdotal evidence suggests that calf survival rates remain high.

In RY2012 the harvest data for the Remainder of Unit 18 shows that 271 moose were harvested, including 123 moose in a recently extended winter season (December 20 - February 28). The winter harvest included 79 antlerless moose (cows). Expanding antlerless moose hunting through a longer resident fall season with an “any moose” bag limit (as proposed) will benefit hunters through increased opportunity, and any increases in harvest may help slow the growth rate of the population in this portion of Unit 18.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **OPPOSED** to this proposal. The changes to the hunt areas along the Yukon River cover broad distances that would make moose management difficult. The apparent swapping of seasons and bag limits in the respective newly named hunt areas would also likely result in confusion among the public. The Department’s preferred options for hunt areas, seasons and bag limits addressed in this proposal are presented in Proposal 4.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to private parties. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 3 – 5 AAC 85.045. Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

PROPOSED BY: Myron Naneng Sr., Association of Village Council Presidents.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would change the resident season and bag limit in Unit 18 Lower Yukon Area and in the Remainder of Unit 18. In both areas the season would be lengthened to Aug. 1-Apr. 30 and the bag limit would be two moose, with limits on taking one antlered bull in the fall hunt (Aug. 1-Sept. 30) and antlerless moose only during Oct. 1-Apr. 30.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The moose seasons and bag limits in the Lower Yukon Area and Remainder of Unit 18 are:

<u>Units and Bag Limits</u>	<u>Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)</u>	<u>Nonresident Open Season</u>
Unit 18, Lower Yukon Area ...		
RESIDENT HUNTERS: 2 moose of which only 1 may be an antlered bull; a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf; or	Aug. 1 - Sept. 30	
2 antlerless moose	Oct. 1 - Last Day of Feb.	
NONRESIDENT HUNTERS: 1 antlered bull;		Sept. 1 - Sept. 30
Remainder of Unit 18		
1 antlered bull; or	Aug. 10 - Sept. 30	Sept. 1 - Sept. 30
1 moose	Dec. 20 - Last Day of Feb.	No open season.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal would create a resident moose season that would be 273 days long (Aug. 1- Apr. 30). This would be an increase of 61 days for the Lower Yukon Area and an increase of 150 days for the Remainder of Unit 18. The bag limit in the Lower Yukon Area would not change; however, the bag limit in the Remainder of Unit 18 would change from one antlered bull to two moose, only one of which may be an antlered bull.

BACKGROUND: Moose populations in this portion of Unit 18 have increased to all-time high levels reaching an estimated minimum population of 12,000 moose. In all areas surveyed, moose populations are increasing with high twinning rates (at or above 40%) and calf to adult ratios that are 37:100 and 36:100. Reported harvest in the past three years has been an average of 328 bulls and 108 cows. Harvests have been stable in the past five years despite increased season length and liberalized bag limits in RY2010

The Remainder of Unit 18 has under-utilized moose habitat and a growing moose population. Based on counts in 2012 and 2013, the population is estimated at above 8,000 moose, with calf:cow ratios of 37:100 and 36:100, respectively. The twinning rate in this area is estimated at 50% and anecdotal evidence suggests that calf survival rates remain high.

In RY2012 the harvest data for the Remainder of Unit 18 shows that 271 moose were harvested, including 123 moose in a recently extended winter season (December 20 - February 28). The winter harvest included 79 antlerless moose (cows). Expanding antlerless moose hunting through a longer resident fall season with an “any moose” bag limit (as proposed) will benefit hunters through increased opportunity, and any increases in harvest may help slow the growth rate of the population in this portion of Unit 18.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **OPPOSED** to this proposal. The proposal limits management options available to the department within the lower Yukon River zone by effectively creating one broad area with liberal seasons and bag limits. This would make moose management difficult. Hunt areas with separate regulations allows the department to respond to differing moose population conditions as they develop through time. The Department’s preferred options for hunt areas, seasons and bag limits addressed in this proposal are contained in Proposal 4.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to private parties. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 4 – 5 AAC 85.045 (a)(16). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal affects two areas in Unit 18. In the Lower Yukon Area it would reauthorize the antlerless hunts with no change. In the Remainder of Unit 18 it would lengthen the resident fall season by ten days (Aug. 1-Sept. 30), change the resident bag limit to one moose in the fall hunt, and reauthorize the winter antlerless hunt.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The current regulations are:

<u>Units and Bag Limits</u>	<u>Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)</u>	<u>Nonresident Open Season</u>
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Unit 18, Lower Yukon Area, that portion north and west of the Kashunuk River including the north bank from the mouth of the river upstream to the old village of Chakaktolik, west of a line from Chakaktolik to Mountain Village, and excluding all Yukon River drainages upriver from Mountain Village:

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

2 moose of which only 1 may be an antlered bull; a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf; or Aug. 1 - Sept. 30

2 antlerless moose Oct. 1 - Last Day of Feb.

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 antlered bull; Sept. 1 - Sept. 30

Remainder of Unit 18

1 antlered bull; or Aug. 10 - Sept. 30 Sept. 1 - Sept. 30

1 moose Dec. 20 - Last Day of Feb. No open season.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Two antlerless hunts would be reauthorized, and in the Remainder of Unit 18 the resident fall moose season would be lengthened 10 days and the resident bag limit in the fall hunt would change from one antlered bull to one moose.

BACKGROUND: Moose populations in this portion of Unit 18 have increased to all-time high levels reaching an estimated minimum population of 12,000 moose. In all areas surveyed, moose populations are increasing with high twinning rates (at or above 40%) and calf to adult ratios that are 37:100 and 36:100. Reported harvest in the past three years has been an average of 328 bulls and 108 cows. Harvests have been stable in the past five years despite increased season length and liberalized bag limits in RY2010

In RY2012 the harvest of 190 moose from the Lower Yukon River shows that harvest has remained stable even with the increased opportunity enacted by the board in November 2011. The winter harvest included 20 antlerless moose (cows). Continuing antlerless moose harvest opportunity will benefit hunters and also help slow the growth rate of the population.

The Remainder of Unit 18 has under-utilized moose habitat and a growing moose population. Based on counts in 2012 and 2013, the population is estimated at above 8,000 moose with calf:cow ratios of 37:100 and 36:100, respectively. The twinning rate in this area is estimated at 50% and anecdotal evidence suggests that calf survival rates remain high.

In RY2012 the harvest data for the Remainder of Unit 18 shows that 271 moose were harvested, including 123 moose in a recently extended winter season (December 20 - February 28). The winter harvest included 79 antlerless moose (cows). Expanding antlerless moose hunting through a longer resident fall

season with an “any moose” bag limit (as proposed) will benefit hunters through increased opportunity, and any increases in harvest may help slow the growth rate of the population in this portion of Unit 18.

The board has made a positive customary and traditional use finding for moose in Unit 18, and has found that 200–400 moose are reasonably necessary for subsistence (5 AAC 99.025(a)(8)).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal to maintain antlerless hunts and offer increased season lengths and bag limits where moose populations are increasing. We believe it retains needed compartmentalization of harvest needed for management flexibility to respond to differing moose population conditions as they develop through time.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to private parties. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 5 – 5 AAC 99.025(a)(9)). Customary and traditional uses of game populations. and 5 AAC 85.050. Hunting seasons and bag limits for muskoxen. *Note: The same proposal is also listed as Proposal 66 to be considered at the Interior (Region III) board meeting.*

PROPOSED BY: Myron Naneng Sr., Association of Village Council Presidents.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? The proposal requests the board to establish subsistence muskoxen hunts throughout Unit 18 and in Unit 19. Given the current negative customary and traditional use finding for muskoxen on Nunivak and Nelson islands, the proposal also requests that the board revisit the customary and traditional use determination for muskoxen in Unit 18. If the board determines that there is significant new information to revisit the current negative customary and traditional use finding, and determines there are customary and traditional uses of Unit 18 muskoxen for subsistence, then this proposal would also provide the board with the opportunity to set an amount reasonably necessary for subsistence uses and establish regulations that provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses of muskoxen in Unit 18.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There are two drawing permit hunts for muskoxen in Unit 18, one for one bull, September 1-30, and one for one bull February 1-March 15. Both residents and nonresidents may participate.

There are also four registration permit hunts in Unit 18, two on Nunivak Island and two on Nelson Island. RX061 is a limited registration permit with a limit of one permit per household issued in Bethel or Mekoryuk on a first-come, first-served basis for one cow on Nunivak Island, February 1-March 15. RX060 is a similar permit with the season to be announced based upon the harvest quota, and with permits distributed in Bethel. The two registration hunts on Nelson Island are both February 1-March 25 seasons with a bag limit of one bull (RX070) or one cow (RX071), permits for which are issued by the Division of Wildlife Conservation on a rotational basis in each of the five United Villages of Nelson Island Corporations as the primary land owners of Nelson Island, including Toksook Bay, Tununak, Nightmute, Chefornak, and Newtok. Both residents and nonresidents may participate.

5 AAC 85.050 Hunting seasons and bag limits for musk oxen

<u>Units and Bag Limits</u>	<u>Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)</u>	<u>Nonresident Open Season</u>
(1)		
Unit 18, Nunivak Island		
1 bull by drawing permit only, with up to 10 permits to be issued for the fall season and up to 100 permits to be issued for the spring season; or 1 cow by registration permit only, with up to 60 permits for cows to be issued on a first-come, first-served basis	Sept. 1 - Sept. 30 (General hunt only) Feb. 1 - Mar. 15 (General hunt only)	Sept. 1 - Sept. 30 Feb. 1 - Mar. 15
Unit 18, Nelson Island		
1 musk ox by registration permit only; up to 42 permits will be issued on a first-come, first-served basis	Feb. 1 - Mar. 25 (General hunt only)	Feb. 1 - Mar. 25
Remainder of Unit 18	No open season.	No open season.

5 AAC 99.025. Customary and traditional uses of game populations

<u>SPECIES & UNIT</u>	<u>FINDING</u>	<u>AMOUNT REASONABLY NECESSARY FOR SUBSISTENCE USES</u>
...		
(9) Musk Oxen		
Unit 18	negative	

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If the board determined that there are customary and traditional uses of Unit 18 muskoxen, the board would then need to set an amount reasonably necessary for subsistence and adopt regulations that provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses of Unit 18 muskoxen. If the board determined that muskoxen in Unit 18 are not associated with customary and traditional uses, then the board could still address the proponent's request to establish a mainland hunt opportunity, if the population could sustain a harvest.

BACKGROUND: In 1987, the board determined that there were not customary and traditional uses of muskoxen in Unit 18. The Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP) has requested the board reevaluate its previous C&T determination based upon new available information and to establish subsistence hunt opportunities for muskoxen in Unit 18, including the mainland. AVCP also requests a subsistence hunt for muskoxen be established in Unit 19, which will be addressed through Proposal 66 at the Region III meeting in Fairbanks. The department will provide a customary and traditional use worksheet and options for amounts reasonably necessary for subsistence to assist the board.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** given the allocative implications. Our position on additional hunt opportunities for muskoxen on Nelson Island is presented in Proposal 6.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to private parties. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 6 – 5 AAC 85.050 (a)(1). Hunting seasons and bag limits for musk oxen

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Remove the upper limit of registration permits issued by the department for Nelson Island muskox hunts in Unit 18. This allows the department the flexibility to adjust harvest quotas in relation to population size and composition of the herd.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Current regulations are:

<u>Units and Bag Limits</u>	<u>Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)</u>	<u>Nonresident Open Season</u>
(1)		
...		
Unit 18, Nelson Island		
1 musk ox by registration permit only; up to 42 permits will be issued on a first-come, first-served basis	Feb. 1 - Mar. 25 (General hunt only)	Feb. 1 - Mar. 25

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED: This proposal would allow the department to issue as many registration permits as necessary to manage the Nelson Island muskox population within population objectives. At high populations, the number would typically exceed

the 42 permit limit. At low populations, the number of permits would be restricted below the 42 permit limit.

BACKGROUND: Muskox were introduced to Nelson Island in 1967-1968 and hunting began in 1981 when the population exceeded 250 animals pre-calving. Except for years 1994-1996 and 2001, the herd experienced population growth and island loyalty, allowing for a harvest. The department established a population management objective of 250-450 muskox based on density in relation to available habitat on the island. Since hunting began, all hunts have been managed by registration permits issued on a first-come, first-served basis and hunter success rates have been very high, typically 95-100%. In recent years the Nelson Island population has been managed at high levels to encourage emigration of animals to the mainland as a means to help increase the mainland herd of muskox in Unit 18. However, emigration rates have been lower than expected by the department and have contributed to substantial increases in the island population. In 2012, a total of 761 muskox were counted in an aerial survey of the island, yielding the highest recorded density of muskox in Alaska. At high population levels there is risk of overgrazing the winter range. In the absence of natural predators on the island, hunter harvest is the tool used by the department to manage populations. Due to the high population, hunting opportunity needs to increase above the 42 permit limit to help reduce the size of the population. Removing the upper limit of registration permits provides the department with the necessary flexibility to manage harvests and population size in the future

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal. It results in increased flexibility to provide hunting opportunity when the population can sustain it.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to private parties. Approval of this proposal is expected to result in minimal additional costs to the department. Issuing more permits would be offset by additional muskox tag revenue because a resident tag is required for this hunt.

PROPOSAL 7 - 5 AAC 85.057. Hunting seasons and bag limits for wolverine.

PROPOSED BY: Aki Komulainen.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal shifts the wolverine hunting season 15 days later in Unit 18. The season opening is delayed 15 days to September 15 and the season is extended 15 days to April 15, resulting in no change to total days in the season.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The wolverine regulations in Unit 18 are:

<u>Units and Bag Limits</u>	<u>Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)</u>	<u>Nonresident Open Season</u>
Unit 18		
2 wolverine	Sept. 1 - Mar. 31	Sept. 1 - Mar. 31

(General hunt only)

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED: This proposal limits the opportunity to harvest wolverines in the fall in Unit 18 through a delayed season opening while increasing opportunity to harvest in the spring through an extended season. The season dates in April overlap with the denning period for female wolverine. In years with good snow conditions, denning areas may be easily reached by snowmachine, potentially allowing increased disturbance or take of denning females.

BACKGROUND: Unit 18 supports a healthy population of wolverine, reported as common in the trapper questionnaire. During RY2003–RY2012, the total reported harvest from Unit 18 was 286 wolverines, with an average annual reported harvest of 29. Hunter harvest in the fall is very low with a 10-year average of less than one per year. Hunter-related harvest increases in the winter when 25% of total harvest occurs by ground shooting via snowmachine access to hunting areas. The 10-year average winter ground shooting harvest is 7 per year. In 2011 the board adopted a proposal to increase the hunting bag limit to 2 wolverine during a Sept. 1-Mar. 31 season, making Unit 18 the most liberal hunting season and bag limit in the state.

Hunting in April during the denning period would occur at sensitive and vulnerable times of the year and has the potential for significant impacts on the population. During this late winter period, reproducing females are vulnerable to harvest because they travel extensively to obtain food while attempting to meet the energetic demands of lactation. A key component of viable wolverine populations is the survival of reproductive females. Harvesting reproductive females during late winter can negatively affect recruitment.

Wolverine have a low reproductive output with females not reaching sexual maturity until 1.5 years of age, then producing their first litter at 2-years of age. Most litter sizes are 2-3 kits, although litters can range from 1 to 5 kits. Average life expectancy is 4-5 years but some animals have been documented reaching 13-years of age. Depending on the diversity and abundance of food or prey, wolverines may not produce their first litter at age 2, or they may skip years between litters. When den sites are disturbed females often relocate kits to a secondary site or abandon their dens. High rates of disturbance during the denning period may also lead to increased mortality of kits.

There is great value placed on wolverine fur for both garments and trophy uses. However, fur quality in September is not good and it generally has a low value for making ruffs and other garments. There is considerable variation among individual pelts with some animals having pristine fur in April compared to other pelts that have thinned tails or rubbed areas near the base of the tail. Female wolverine near full-term pregnancies or while lactating will have reduced fur quality with thin hair along the sides and belly.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. Although the hunter harvest is anticipated to be low, we do have concerns with the potential disturbance and take of wolverine during the denning period which is a vulnerable time in their life-cycle.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to private parties. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 8 - 5 AAC 85.060. Hunting seasons and bag limits for fur animals.

PROPOSED BY: Aki Komulainen.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would extend the lynx hunting season 40 days by adding 10 days to the start of the season and 30 days at the end of the season. This would align the closing dates on state and federal lands for lynx hunting in Unit 18.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Lynx regulations in Unit 18 are:

<u>Units and Bag Limits</u>	<u>Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)</u>	<u>Nonresident Open Season</u>
(4) Lynx		
Unit 18		
2 lynx	Nov. 10 - Mar. 31 (General hunt only)	Nov. 10 - Mar. 31

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED: This proposal creates a lynx hunting season during Nov. 1-Apr. 30 allowing an additional 40 days of opportunity on state land for people to harvest lynx, 10 more days in November and 30 more days in April. The season ending date of April 30 would be aligned on both state and federal lands.

BACKGROUND: Lynx are common in Unit 18, although their abundance varies widely depending on the status of hare populations. The lynx population peaked in 2011 and is now entering its cyclic decline making the species less available to hunters because of lower densities. Hunter harvests in Unit 18 are generally low compared to the resiliency of the population to increase dramatically when prey is abundant. To promote take when fur quality is good, the season has been opened on November 10 and reported harvest data shows a November average of 1 lynx taken through hunting. While there is great value placed on the fur, many people are also interested in lynx primarily for their meat. The use of meat is supplemental to the salvage requirements of furs and hides of game animals (see 5 AAC 92.220). During fall moose seasons there is some desire by hunters to harvest lynx when seasons are open and this has the potential to influence lynx harvest in areas where combination hunting occurs. Due to increased ease of access via snowmachines, the resulting hunter interest, effort, and harvest is anticipated to be higher if the spring hunting season is extended into April. However, based on low harvest trends in the unit the additive portion of increased harvest in April would be sustainable by the population.

Lynx are born in late May or early June. Weaning is accomplished by 12 weeks of age in early to late August. Kits remain with females for their first winter dispersing in spring with the onset of breeding season in March and early April. Litter size averages 2-4 kits, but can be as high as 6.

In RY2012 state and federal lynx seasons fell out of alignment in regards to both the start and closing date of the hunting season. Currently the federal hunting season for lynx in Unit 18 starts August 10 and ends

April 30 with a bag limit of 5. Other considerations with this proposal would include amending the bag limit from 2 lynx to 5 lynx further aligning state regulations with federal regulations.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. Starting the season on November 1 infringes on the time when pelts are of reduced quality but this is offset by increased opportunity to take lynx for meat.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to private parties. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 9 - 5 AAC 85.060. Hunting seasons and bag limits for fur animals.

PROPOSED BY: Jon Lavalle.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would extend the lynx hunting season by adding 30 days in the spring ending on April 30. This would align the closing dates on state and federal lands for lynx hunting.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Lynx regulations in Unit 18 are:

<u>Units and Bag Limits</u>	<u>Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)</u>	<u>Nonresident Open Season</u>
(4) Lynx		
Unit 18		
2 lynx	Nov. 10 - Mar. 31 (General hunt only)	Nov. 10 - Mar. 31

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED: This proposal would create a lynx hunting season during Nov. 10-Apr. 30 allowing an additional 30 days during April to harvest lynx. The extended season would align the closure of the lynx hunting season on both state and federal lands.

BACKGROUND: Lynx are common in Unit 18, although their abundance varies widely depending on the status of hare populations. The lynx population peaked in 2011 and is now entering its cyclic decline making the species less available to hunters because of lower densities. Hunter harvests in Unit 18 are generally low compared to the resiliency of the population to increase dramatically when prey is abundant. To promote take when fur quality is good, the season has been opened on November 10 and reported harvest data shows a November average of 1 lynx taken through hunting. While there is great value placed on the fur, many people are also interested in lynx primarily for their meat. The use of meat is supplemental to the salvage requirements of furs and hides of game animals (see 5 AAC 92.220).

During fall moose seasons there is some desire by hunters to harvest lynx when seasons are open and this has the potential to influence lynx harvest in areas where combination hunting occurs. Due to increased ease of access via snowmachines, the resulting hunter interest, effort, and harvest is anticipated to be higher if the spring hunting season is extended into April. However, based on low harvest trends in the unit the additive portion of increased harvest in April would be sustainable by the population.

Lynx are born in late May or early June. Weaning is accomplished by 12 weeks of age in early to late August. Kits remain with females for their first winter dispersing in spring with the onset of breeding season in March and early April. Litter size averages 2-4 kits, but can be as high as 6.

In RY2012 state and federal lynx seasons fell out of alignment in regards to both the start and closing date of the hunting season. Currently the federal hunting season for lynx in Unit 18 starts August 10 and ends April 30 with a bag limit of 5. Other considerations with this proposal would include amending the bag limit from 2 lynx to 5 lynx further aligning state regulations with federal regulations.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal. We believe that additional opportunity can be provided within the context of sustained yield management.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to private parties. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 10 – 5 AAC 92.450(18)(19)(21). Description of game management units. *Note: The same proposal is also listed as Proposal 67 to be considered at the Interior (Region III) board meeting.*

PROPOSED BY: Central Kuskokwim Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Redefine the game management unit boundaries where Units 18, 19, and 21 join together with common boundaries:

Create new language for Unit 18 to read:

The area draining into the Yukon River downstream from a line starting at the down river boundary of Paimiut on the north bank of the Yukon River then across the river to the south bank to the northern terminus of the Paimiut Portage, proceed south through the Portage to the mouth of Hooking Creek on the northeast corner of Arhymot Lake, follow the northern and western bank of the lake to the head of Crooked Creek, follow the north bank of the creek downstream to the northern terminus of the Crooked Creek to Mud Creek Tramway, follow the tramway south to Mud Creek, follow its west bank downstream to First Slough, follow the west bank of the slough downstream to its confluence to the Kuskokwim River,

Use clearly visible land marks to create new language for Unit 19 to read:

The area draining into the Kuskokwim River upstream from the confluence of the First Slough and the Kuskokwim River; and the area draining into Crook Creek's south bank upstream from the northern terminus of the Mud Creek to Crook Creek Portage Tramway.

Use clearly visible land marks to create new language for Unit 21 to read:

The area draining into the Yukon River upstream from the down river boundary of Paimiut on the north shore of the Yukon River and, directly across the river, the northern terminus of the Paimiut Portage on the south shore of the Yukon River.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The current game management unit boundaries are as follows:

Codified regulations.

(18) Game Management Unit 18 consists of that area draining into the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers downstream from a straight line drawn between Lower Kalskag and Paimiut and the drainages flowing into the Bering Sea from Cape Newenham on the south to and including the Pastolik River drainage on the north; Nunivak, St. Matthews, and adjacent islands between Cape Newenham and the Pastolik River, and all seaward waters and lands within three miles of these coastlines;

(19) Game Management Unit 19 consists of the Kuskokwim River drainage upstream from Lower Kalskag [*Note: This is slightly different from the hunting regulations booklet, see hunting regulations section below*];

(A) Unit 19(A) consists of the Kuskokwim River drainage downstream from and including the Moose Creek drainage on the north bank and downstream from and including the Stony River drainage on the south bank, excluding Unit 19(B);

...

(21) Game Management Unit 21 consists of drainages into the Yukon River upstream from Paimiut to but not including the Tozitna River drainage on the north bank, and to but not including the Tanana River drainage on the south bank, and excluding the Koyukuk River drainage upstream from the Dulbi River drainage [*Note: This is worded differently from the hunting regulations booklet, see hunting regulations section below*];

...

(E) Unit 21(E) consists of the Yukon River drainage from Paimiut upstream to but not including the Blackburn Creek drainage, and the Innoko River drainage downstream from the Iditarod River drainage;

...

Hunting Regulations booklet and maps.

Unit 18 is defined as: “That area draining into the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers downstream from a straight line drawn between Lower Kalskag and Paimiut and the drainages flowing into the Bering Sea from Cape Newenham on the south to and including the Pastolik River drainage on the north; Nunivak, St. Matthew, and adjacent islands between Cape Newenham and the Pastolik River and all seaward waters and lands within three (3) miles of these coastlines.”

Unit 19 is defined as: “All drainages into the Kuskokwim River upstream from a straight line drawn between Lower Kalskag and Paimiut.” [*Note: This is slightly differently from the codified regulations, see codified regulations section above.*]

Unit 21 is defined as: “Middle Yukon drainages into the Yukon River upstream from Paimiut to but not including the Tozitna River drainage on the north bank, and to but not including the Tanana River drainage on the south bank, and excluding the Koyukuk River drainage upstream from the Dulbi River drainage.” [Note: This is worded differently from the codified regulations, see codified regulations section above.]

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Redefine and clarify the game management unit boundaries. The proposal would change a straight-line point-to-point boundary in featureless terrain and other confusing sections to a route based on identifiable landmarks and drainages. Portions of resident moose hunt area RM615 in Unit 18 would move to a resident Tier II TM680 hunt area in Unit 19A.

BACKGROUND: This proposal is similar to others that were deferred in January 2010 (Proposal 44), deferred in spring 2011 (Proposal 205), and no action was taken during the statewide meeting in 2012 (Proposal 21).

Currently the game management unit maps produced by the department do not accurately reflect the codified definitions of Unit 18, 19, and 21. Three problems exist with the current maps:

- 1) the precise points used to define the line between Paimiut and Lower Kalskag are unclear (e.g., what part of Lower Kalskag or Paimiut should be used?);
- 2) the large slough locally known as Old River drains into the Kuskokwim downriver of Lower Kalskag and any water draining into that slough would be in Unit 18, but current maps show this area to be part of Unit 19 affecting approximately 700 mi²; and
- 3) the current map of Unit 21E includes a portion of the Kuskokwim River drainage which is defined as being in Unit 19A.

The department is aware of these discrepancies but has not corrected them pending action on boundary proposals addressing this specific area in 2010, 2011, and 2012.

Moose hunting is primarily by residents and managed by:

- 1) registration permit RM615 in Unit 18 Kuskokwim drainage, adjacent to Unit 19A;
- 2) general harvest ticket hunt in Unit 18 Yukon drainage, adjacent to Unit 21E;
- 3) Tier II permit TM680 in Unit 19A, adjacent to Units 18 and 21E; and
- 4) general harvest ticket hunt in Unit 21E, adjacent to Units 18 and 19A.

As this boundary changes, or as administration of this boundary is corrected, these hunts will be affected. Hunters with particular interest in any of these hunts and their representative advisory committees have strong opinions.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. After multiple proposals and discussions, the affected advisory committees have not come to a consensus on a preferred solution. Proposals to change this boundary have gone through several regulatory cycles, and it is important that this regulatory issue get resolved. It is also important that the new boundary reflects landmarks that are more easily located by ground-based hunters. Regardless of the board’s action on changing the boundaries, either the existing game management unit maps will need to be changed to match codified regulations, or the codified regulations describing the game management units will need to be changed to match the maps. Board action will determine one of three options:

- 1) new maps will conform to the current regulations;
- 2) regulations will conform to the boundaries found on the current maps; or
- 3) new maps will conform to the regulations resulting from action on this proposal.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to private parties. Whether or not this proposal is adopted, there will be administrative costs for the department because administrative errors need to be corrected but it is unclear whether corrections or changes will have higher costs.

PROPOSAL 11 – 5 AAC92.085. Unlawful methods of taking big game; exceptions.

PROPOSED BY: Jon Lavalle.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal sets a minimum standard of center-fire .243 caliber for the taking of big game animals in Unit 18, excluding the taking of wolves and wolverines.

This proposal would prohibit the use of smaller center-fire firearms such as .22 caliber firearms (including the popular .223 caliber) to harvest big game in Unit 18, except wolves and wolverines could still be harvested with center-fire calibers smaller than .243.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Big game may only be harvested with centerfire firearms with a few exceptions, as noted in regulation:

The following methods and means of taking big game are prohibited in addition to the prohibitions in 5 AAC 92.080:

- (1) with the use of a firearm other than a shotgun, muzzleloader, or rifle or pistol using a center-firing cartridge, except that
 - (A) in Units 23 and 26, swimming caribou may be taken with a firearm using rim fire cartridges;
 - (B) the use of a muzzleloader is prohibited unless the firearm is a shoulder mounted long gun, 45 caliber or larger, with a barrel that is either rifled or smoothbore, and discharges a single projectile; and
 - (C) the use of a muzzleloader equipped with a scope, or a muzzleloader using smokeless powder as a charge, during any permitted, registered, or special season hunt for muzzleloaders only, is prohibited;

...

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The proposal requests that a minimum caliber of .243 be allowed for the taking of big game other than wolves and wolverine. This means that the commonly used center-fire .22 caliber in Unit 18 would not be legal for the taking of big game other than wolves and wolverines. This would affect the popular use of .223 Remington and any other smaller center-fire cartridges.

BACKGROUND: Reducing wounding loss is a primary consideration for the taking of big game in all areas of the state. The board has considered similar proposals asking for caliber restrictions on a unitwide, regionwide or statewide basis. Small caliber cartridges leave little room for error when it comes to shot placement for lethal results, so off-target shots are likely to result in wounding losses. Commercial ammunition available for small cartridges is also not considered appropriate for hunting big game. Alternatively, those favoring the use of small caliber cartridges explain that when small calibers are used correctly they can be effective in taking big game, and small calibers allow younger hunters a greater opportunity to hunt.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. If adopted, it can be expected that decreased wounding mortality will occur.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is expected to result in additional costs to private parties, as hunters may be required to purchase different rifles and ammunition. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 12 – 5 AAC 92.220. Salvage of game meat, furs, and hides

PROPOSED BY: Myron Naneng Sr., Association of Village Council Presidents.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would change the salvage requirements of all migratory and upland game birds in Unit 18 to include all the edible portions of the animal. Only the wingtip, feathers and non-edible entrails would not need to be salvaged.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Currently, only the breast meat of wild fowl is required to be salvaged. This requirement is specified in regulations related to salvage of game meat for human consumption and the definition of “edible meat”.

5 AAC 92.220. Salvage of game meat, furs, and hides

...

(d) A person taking game not listed in (a) of this section shall salvage for human consumption all edible meat, as defined in 5 AAC 92.990. In addition,

...

5 AAC 92.990. Definitions

...

(17) "edible meat" means, in the case of a big game animal, except a black bear, the meat of the ribs, neck, brisket, front quarters as far as the distal joint of the radius-ulna (knee), hindquarters as far as the distal joint of the tibia-fibula (hock), and the meat along the backbone between the front and hindquarters; in the case of a black bear, the meat of the front quarters and hindquarters and meat along the backbone (backstrap); in the case of wild fowl, the meat of the breast; however, "edible meat" of big game or wild fowl does not include meat of the head, meat that has been damaged and made inedible by the method of taking, bones, sinew, incidental meat reasonably lost as a result of boning or a close trimming of the bones, or viscera;

...

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal would add other edible portions of wild fowl to the current salvage requirement of “meat of the breast” to achieve less waste of harvested birds. The only parts deemed inedible and not salvaged are described as wingtips, feathers, and entrails. To be enforceable the “edible meat” definition would need to be changed so that it can be referenced properly in the salvage of game meat regulation (5 AAC 92.990(d)). In Unit 18, people who harvest wild fowl would be subject to stricter salvage requirements for each individual bird, affecting harvest of a wide variety of species and sizes of birds (e.g., tundra swans to snipe). The impact on total number of birds harvested by individual hunters is not known, although it is likely that more effort may be required to comply with the proposed changes.

BACKGROUND: Wild fowl, waterfowl and ptarmigan, in particular, are important species for food for many resident of Unit 18. How a person uses different parts of these species can vary considerably. The salvage regulation has been applied to all game meat, including birds or wild fowl, on a statewide basis to establish minimum standards to ensure responsible use of game animals. Changes to salvage regulations are normally considered at statewide meetings unless area specific factors need to be considered on a case by case basis. The proponent cites a case in Unit 18 where the minimum requirement of wild fowl salvage was applied by a hunter to the largest harvested bird species resulting in a strong community reaction about unacceptable waste.

The department recognizes this proposal attempts to make salvage requirements consistent with regional cultural and traditional practices in Unit 18. The current regulations define the *minimum* standards on a statewide basis and hunters may salvage additional parts of birds they harvest.

For certain units, the board has made positive customary and traditional use findings for Canada geese, ptarmigan, and grouse, but not yet contemplated grouse in Unit 18. As a result, the department will present a customary and traditional use worksheet to assist the board in this determination.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal as it does not affect sustained yield management of affected species.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to private parties. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 13 - 5 AAC 85.045. Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

PROPOSED BY: Native Village of Wales.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would shift the winter moose season from January dates to Mar. 1-Mar. 31 in Unit 22(E).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The moose regulations in Unit 22(E) are:

Resident
Open Season

<u>Units and Bag Limits</u> (20)	<u>(Subsistence and General Hunts)</u>	<u>Nonresident Open Season</u>
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...

Unit 22(E)

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 bull; or	Aug. 1 - Dec. 31
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1 antlered bull	Jan. 1 - Jan. 31
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NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 bull with 50-inch antlers or antlers with 4 or more brow tines on one side by registration permit only	Sept. 1 - Sept. 14
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WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The winter moose season established in Unit 22(E) would be held during the month of March instead of January.

BACKGROUND: After a 2001 spring population survey found a low population of 169 moose in Unit 22(E), the Board of Game adopted regulations for RY2002 that changed the bag limit for residents from one moose to one antlered bull moose, shortened the 8 month long season to 5 month long season (Aug. 1 - Dec. 31), and closed the nonresident moose season. By 2007 population status had improved and the Board of Game revised the resident season and added nonresident regulations effective for RY2008. The resident season was expanded to include a one-month winter season (Jan. 1-Jan. 31) with a bag limit of one antlered bull moose. The nonresident season was opened in the fall (Sept 1-Sept 14) by registration permit with antler restrictions and a quota of 10 bulls. No changes to regulations have been made since 2007.

Since 2001 there has been a trend of increasing moose abundance in Unit 22(E). Stratified sampling population surveys completed by the department have estimated the population at 504 (\pm 9.5% at 90% CI) moose in 2003; increasing to 587 (\pm 18.2% at 90% CI) moose in 2006; and increasing to 669 (\pm 15.7% at 90% CI) moose in 2011. This represents a 4% annual rate of population growth since 2003 yielding a level that is above the population management objective of 200-250 moose. Based on the most recent population estimate, sustainable harvest from the population is between 27- 54 bull moose for both resident harvest ticket hunts (GM000) and nonresident registration permit hunts (RM853). Moose in Unit 22 have a positive customary and traditional use finding, with the amount reasonably necessary for subsistence found to be 250–300 moose.

Reported harvest by residents between RY2002 and RY2012 indicate an average annual harvest of 12 moose. Harvest report card data indicate 20 moose were harvested during RY2009; and a household subsistence survey covering the same harvest period completed in Shishmaref in February 2010 found 34 moose were harvested. In RY2010 residents reported 13 moose; and a household subsistence survey completed in Wales in May 2011 found 5 moose were harvested. Harvest survey information collected in 2001 has documented moose harvests by Wales and Shishmaref in Unit 22(E). of 14 and 58 moose,

respectively. This information is consistent with our belief that unreported moose harvest occurs in Unit 22(E). Nonresident harvest by registration permit (RM853) between RY2008 and RY2013 has been low with an average annual harvest of 3 moose. Combining resident and nonresident average harvests with the results from household subsistence surveys suggests the average annual harvest from Unit 22(E). is likely 20 - 50 moose per year. Timing of harvest shows 75% (n=96) of harvest occurs during the fall (August, September, and October), and 4% (n=5) occurs during January.

Antler drop of mature bulls generally begins in December. Spring moose surveys on the Seward Peninsula have shown younger bulls retain their antlers into early spring which make them available for harvest. A March season is not expected to impact the breeding bulls in the population, but will likely result in an increased harvest of young bulls due to better hunting and winter travel conditions. Total harvest, including the additive portion associated with a March season, is expected to be within the allowable harvest objective for the Unit 22(E) population. Continuing the antlered bull bag limit in March will prevent cow harvest and help ensure the reproductive potential of the herd is not diminished. The current winter season in January makes travel conditions difficult and less desirable because few hours of daylight exist. A March season would provide longer daylight hours, safer travel, and more favorable weather for hunters to actively hunt.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal for a Mar. 1 – Mar. 31 season with a bag limit of one antlered bull. The moose population in Unit 22(E) is above the management population objective of 200-250 moose and the anticipated increases in harvest will remain within available harvest.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to private parties. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 14 – 5 AAC 85.045(a)(20). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Establish an antlered bull season in Unit 22(A) Unalakleet River drainage (Unit 22A Central) to be announced by emergency order during the period Dec. 1–Dec. 31

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The current regulations in the Unalakleet River drainage in Unit 22(A) are:

	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
<u>Units and Bag Limits</u> (20)		

...

Unit 22(A) that portion in the Unalakleet River drainage and

all drainages flowing into
Norton Sound north of the
Golsovia River drainage and
south of the Tagoomenik and
Shaktoolik River drainages

1 antlered bull by
registration permit only

Sept. 1 - Sept. 14

No open season.

...

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The proposal establishes a winter season announced by emergency order for an antlered bull by registration permit in Unit 22(A) Unalakleet River drainage for the period of Dec. 1- Dec. 31. The winter hunt would only be announced if the department determines that the available harvest quota remaining after the fall season harvest can be administered in a winter hunt without overharvesting the population.

BACKGROUND: The central portion of Unit 22(A) contains the Unalakleet River drainage and has a recent history of low moose populations. Based on a low count of 75 moose in 2003 and local concerns over the declining population, the season was closed to allow the population to rebuild to higher levels. Following a stratified moose census completed by the department in March 2008 with an estimated 339 moose in the area, the Board of Game adopted a resident registration moose hunt in RY2008. For this hunt the department used low harvest rates to prevent overharvest while the population was rebuilding. The population has continued to increase and a stratified moose census completed in February 2012 estimated 545 moose \pm 17% (452 to 639 moose at 90% C.I.). This is a 13% annual rate of increase from the 2008 population survey.

The department and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) cooperatively manage hunting by sharing a combined annual harvest quota during fall seasons because state-managed land and federal public land have a patchwork pattern in this area. The federal season is Aug. 15-Sept. 14 and the state season is Sept. 1-Sept. 14. At the lower population level in RY2008, the annual harvest quota was 14 antlered bulls. When the population increased in 2012, the annual harvest quota was set at 22 antlered bulls for both RY2012 and RY2013. The state season dates of Sept. 1-Sept. 14 were developed to improve meat care by avoiding warm weather at the beginning of the season, and minimize disturbance and harvest of adult bulls as they enter the rut. The protection of breeding bulls in September is considered a key step in the process to rebuild the population while allowing hunters the opportunity to harvest bulls in mid-August and the early part of September.

Season extensions were requested by the public and the Southern Norton Sound Fish and Game Advisory Committee in RY2011, RY2012, and RY2013. In each case the state season was extended by emergency order to September 20. In one year, RY2012, the extended season did not reach the combined harvest quota so a winter registration hunt by emergency order was also used to fill the available quota remaining after the fall season harvest.

Fall season extensions into September are less advisable than winter hunts because of the department's priority to protect breeding bulls during the rut. In the Unalakleet area the strategy of using an announced winter registration hunt based on unmet harvest (after the fall hunt) would be consistent with other Unit

22 registration moose hunts in Units 22(C) and 22(D). To avoid risk of overharvest, winter hunts are only announced if the department determines the hunt can be administered without overharvesting the population. Close monitoring of harvest is achieved with registration permit hunt conditions requiring successful hunters to report within 24 hours of harvest.

Antler drop of mature bulls generally begins in December. A December moose hunt is not expected to impact or harvest the breeding bulls in the population. Younger bulls retain their antlers into January and early February making them available for harvest during a season announced in December. The antlered bull bag limit protects cows which are needed to maximize population recovery.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal to provide additional hunting opportunity through winter hunts when harvest quotas are not filled. The winter season dates of Dec.1 – Dec. 31 were recommended by the Southern Norton Sound Fish and Game Advisory Committee. The antlered bull bag limit in December protects cows and does not impact large bulls that have dropped their antlers. This proposal alleviates the repeated requests to extend seasons when annual harvest quotas are not achieved in fall hunts.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to private parties. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 15 - 5 AAC 85.045(a)(20). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Reauthorize the antlerless moose seasons in Unit 22(C) and the Remainder of Unit 22(D)

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The moose regulations in the areas affected by this proposal are:

<u>Units and Bag Limits</u> (20)	<u>Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)</u>	<u>Nonresident Open Season</u>
...		
Unit 22(C)		
RESIDENT HUNTERS:		
1 bull by registration permit only; or	Sept. 1 - Sept. 14	
1 antlerless moose by registration permit only; or	Sept. 15 - Sept. 30	

1 antlered bull by registration permit only; during the period Jan. 1 – Jan. 31, a season may be announced by emergency order

Jan. 1 - Jan. 31
(To be announced)

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 bull with 50-inch antlers or antlers with 4 or more brow tines on one side by registration permit only

Sept. 1 - Sept. 14

...

Remainder of Unit 22(D)

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 moose; however, antlerless moose may be taken only from Dec. 1 - Dec. 31; a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf; only antlered moose may be taken from Jan. 1 - Jan.31

Aug. 10 - Sept. 14
Oct. 1 - Jan. 31

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 bull with 50-inch antlers or antlers with 4 or more brow tines on one side, by registration permit only

Sept. 1 - Sept. 14

...

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? An antlerless moose hunt in Remainder of Unit 22(D) would be retained, and an optional antlerless hunt, not scheduled in near future, in Unit 22C would be retained.

BACKGROUND: In October 1999, the board authorized a registration hunt for antlerless moose in Unit 22(C) and the department has managed this hunt with a quota of up to 33 permits annually. During the period from RY2001 through RY2012, the Unit 22(C) population was above its management objective of 450-525 moose and believed to be at or near winter range carrying capacity with populations of 620 and 660 moose when counted in RY2007 and RY2011, respectively. Lowering the population through additional bull harvest was ill-advised due to low bull:cow ratios, ranging from 10-20 bulls:100 cows. Instead, issuing antlerless permits was used to yield harvests of 8-24 antlerless moose per year over the period since RY2001 to achieve population reduction and stabilization. This approach successfully reduced the population to the current estimate of 430 moose in February 2013. Although the department has the latitude of issuing antlerless permits, no permits were issued for RY2013, nor are any planned to be issued for RY2014 because the population has been lowered to management guidelines. We will consider antlerless hunts when factors suggest the population is increasing above carrying capacity. Retaining the antlerless authorization gives flexibility to the department in future hunt management.

In most other parts of Unit 22, low recruitment rates are believed to be causing low moose populations and declines. However, in the Remainder of Unit 22(D) we recommend continued authorization of antlerless moose hunting where moose populations are stable and hunting pressure is low compared to other areas of Unit 22. This portion of Unit 22(D) is relatively remote with difficult access and these factors contribute to limited hunting pressure in the area.

In the Remainder of Unit 22(D), the moose population has grown 1% annually during the period 1997-2011 and the estimated number of moose has increased from 578 in 1997 to 700 in 2011. This area typically shows higher calf:cow and calf:adult ratios than other parts of Unit 22, annually ranging from 14-35ca:100ad with an average of 23ca:100ad since 1988. The reported cow harvest in this area has been low, averaging 1 cow moose per year since 2000. Community-harvest survey data collected in 2000 and 2012 shows 5 and 1 cow moose, respectively, were harvested from this area, which is a more realistic estimate of annual cow harvest compared to harvest ticket reports. Low harvest rates of antlerless moose support our recommendation to reauthorize antlerless moose seasons in the Remainder of Unit 22(D).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal to retain antlerless hunts. The department does not plan to administer the Unit 22(C) antlerless hunt when the population is within objectives, but the proposal gives the department flexibility to administer the hunt in the future if the population increases above the population objective.

The antlerless hunt administered in the Remainder of Unit 22(D) continues to provide opportunity for hunters who pursue it and the population can sustain the average harvest rate of 1 antlerless moose per year.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to private parties. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 16 –5 AAC 85.020. Hunting seasons and bag limits for brown bear.

PROPOSED BY: Sitnasuak Native Corp., Kawerak, Inc., King Island Native Corp., and Nome Eskimo Community.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Proposal 16 would change the Unit 22(C) bag limit to one brown bear every regulatory year, and add 30 days to the spring season in Unit 22(C) by starting the season on April 1.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The current brown bear regulations are:

	Resident	
	Open Season	
	(Subsistence and	Nonresident
<u>Units and Bag Limits</u>	<u>General Hunts)</u>	<u>Open Season</u>
(20)		

...

Unit 22(C)

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 bear every regulatory year by registration permit Aug. 1 - Oct. 31
May 1 - May 31
(Subsistence hunt only)

1 bear every 4 regulatory years Aug. 1 - Oct. 31
May 1 - May 31

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 bear every 4 regulatory years by drawing permit only; up to 27 permits may be issued in combination with Unit 22(B) Aug. 1 - Oct. 31 May 1 - May 31

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If Proposal 16 is adopted, it would change the Unit 22(C) bag limit in the general hunt to one bear every regulatory year, and extend the spring season by adding 30 days during April for all hunts. The result would likely produce a higher harvest of brown bears in Unit 22(C).

BACKGROUND: Unit 22 brown bear hunting regulations were incrementally liberalized by the Board of Game beginning in 1997. Regulations were liberalized through lengthened seasons for all hunters, increased bag limits, and tag exemptions for resident hunters. The liberalization was implemented to help decrease predation rates on declining moose populations in portions of Unit 22. Deep snow initiated the moose population declines, 1988-1992, and low recruitment from suspected brown bear predation on moose calves further depleted the population.

Unlike Units 22(B) and 22(D) where moose populations have declined significantly, the Unit 22(C) moose population maintained recruitment rates ranging from 13%-25% during 2001-2013, resulting in subunit populations above management objectives. During the period RY2001 through RY2012, the department administered antlerless hunts to prevent further population growth and reduce the moose population closer to the objective of 450-525 moose. A stratified sampling population survey completed in 2013 estimated 430 moose ($\pm 17\%$ at 90% C.I.), which is slightly below the desired objective. The spring calf recruitment of 13% was at the lower end of the range observed during the previous decade. The antlerless moose hunt was canceled in RY2013 because further reduction of the population through antlerless harvest was not needed.

Road accessible areas in Unit 22(C) provide ample opportunity for hunters to harvest a brown bear. Harvest is driven by weather and spring snow travel conditions that can cause variable annual harvest. Historical harvest between RY1990 and RY1997 in Unit 22(C) shows an average annual harvest of 8 bears. Between RY1998 and RY2012 harvest increased 100% with an average annual harvest of 16 bears.

Brown bear population data is minimal in Unit 22(C) and makes it difficult to assess current population numbers. Reported harvest data is consistent with the management goal to sustain a 3-year mean annual reported harvest of at least 50% boars. Unit 22(C) sealing records indicate 52% (156 of 234) of bears taken between RY1990 and RY1997 were boars, and 60% (142 of 236) of bears taken between RY1998 and RY2012 were boars.

In 2011 the spring season in Unit 22(C) was lengthened 15 days by the Board of Game to include a season of May 1-May 31. This change was implemented in RY2012 and has only affected the May 2013 season to date. Since only one season of harvest data has been received, the department has insufficient data to evaluate its impacts on harvest. The department needs more time for close monitoring of the relationship between season length and harvest before making additional changes to the season. Extending the season into April would confound the interpretation of the incremental May season changes because harvest would be influenced by good winter travel conditions and improved access to hunting areas associated with April hunts. Until a brown bear population estimate can be completed for Unit 22, the department prefers to make small or singular changes to Unit 22 brown bear regulations so harvest can be carefully monitored.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS:

The department **SUPPORTS** the proposal's first priority to change the bag limit to one brown bear every regulatory year in Unit 22(C). The increased opportunity and anticipated increases in bear harvest are measures that may reduce local bear numbers, protect against future predator-induced declines of the Unit 22(C) moose population, and reduce complaints about too many bears in this area from the public.

The department is **OPPOSED** to lengthening the season and changing the bag limit at the same time. The department prefers that regulations be liberalized incrementally to better evaluate the effect of sequential changes in regulations.

In the past, Unit 22 residents have demonstrated their ability to capitalize on liberalized bear hunting seasons. Unit 22 harvest records show a 74% increase in harvest after liberalization of seasons and bag limits beginning in 1997. Prior to 1997 the 8-year annual harvest was 54 bears per year; after liberalizations in 1997, the 15-year annual average increased to 94 bears per year. Based on this pattern of hunter effort and success, the department anticipates the priority option to change bag limit will yield measureable increases in harvest. Adding additional season dates in April without evaluating bag limit changes raises concerns about sustainable harvest in Unit 22(C), especially when spring travel conditions are good.

The Unit 22(C) moose population reduction was likely the result of 13 years of antlerless moose hunt management rather than responses to brown bear predation. After the next Unit 22(C) moose estimate scheduled for 2016, if the population shows further reduction (without antlerless hunts) the department would recommend additional brown bear opportunity through extended seasons. This approach provides staff a multi-year period to evaluate the lengthened brown bear spring season effective in RY2012 and a 2-year period to evaluate the effect of 'one bear per year' bag limit suggested as a priority by this proposal.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to private parties. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 17 – 5 AAC 85.020. Hunting seasons and bag limits for brown bear.

PROPOSED BY: Virgil L. Umphenour.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would close the Unit 22(A) brown bear season on June 15 across the unit. This means the season in the southern portion of Unit 22(A) would be extended by 15 days. The new season in Unit 22(A) south of and including the Golsovia River drainage would be Aug. 1- June 15.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The current regulations are:

<u>Units and Bag Limits</u>	<u>Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)</u>	<u>Nonresident Open Season</u>
(20)		
Unit 22(A), south of and including the Golsovia River drainage		
RESIDENT HUNTERS:		
2 bears every regulatory year by registration permit only	Aug. 1 - May 31 (Subsistence hunt only)	
2 bears every regulatory year	Aug. 1 - May 31	
NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:		
1 bear every regulatory year		Aug. 1 - May 31
Remainder of Unit 22(A)		
RESIDENT HUNTERS:		
2 bears every regulatory year by registration permit only	Aug. 1 - June 15 (Subsistence hunt only)	
2 bears every regulatory year	Aug. 1 - June 15	
NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:		
1 bear every regulatory year		Aug. 1 - June 15

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The season in Unit 22(A) South would be extended an additional 15 days to close June 15. The season in the Remainder of Unit 22(A) currently closes on June 15, so there would be no change to this area.

BACKGROUND: Unit 22 brown bear hunting regulations were incrementally liberalized by the Board of Game beginning in 1997. Regulations were liberalized through lengthened seasons for all hunters, increased bag limits, and tag exemptions for resident hunters. The liberalization was implemented to help decrease predation rates on declining moose populations in portions of Unit 22. Low recruitment from suspected brown bear predation on moose calves further depleted moose.

The Board of Game adopted regulations in 2005 to increase the Unit 22(A) bag limit for Alaska residents to two bears every regulatory year, and one bear every regulatory year for nonresidents. The average annual harvest between RY1998 and RY2005 was 26 bears. The average annual harvest between RY2006 and RY2012 was 33 bears which is a 26% increase in harvest (after the change in regulations).

The Unit 22(A) regulations do not require nonresidents to obtain a permit so hunter effort cannot be tracked. Data collected from sealing certificates indicate nonresidents reported 84% (n=436) of brown bears harvested in Unit 22(A) during RY1990-RY2012.

The department does not have a population estimate for brown bears in Unit 22(A). However, reported harvests are consistent with the management goal to sustain a 3-year mean annual reported harvest of at least 50% boars. Sealing records indicate 68% (144 of 212) of bears taken between RY1998 and RY2005 were boars, and 67% (156 of 234) of bears taken between RY2006 and RY2012 were boars.

The proposal changes the season in Unit 22(A) South where brown bears are vulnerable to harvest when they congregate along the coast to eat herring spawn-on kelp and herring during late May and early June. The department anticipates brown bear harvest will increase significantly as a result of congregating bears during the extended season. Brown bear harvest in Unit 22(A) has increased 26% since the Board liberalized bear regulations in the local area in 2005.

The moose population in Unit 22(A) South supports a 2-month resident general season hunt in the fall (August and September) and a 1-month winter (January) hunt. Nonresidents have a 1-month general season hunt in September. The department does not have moose population census data from this area and cannot assess the impact of predation by brown bears on moose.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **OPPOSED** to extending the Unit 22(A) South brown bear spring season to June 15. Unit 22(A) brown bear harvest has increased 26% since seasons were lengthened and two bear per year bag limits were established in the area. Brown bears congregate along the coast in early June and are susceptible to high levels of harvest because, unlike the other portions of Unit 22, nonresident hunting in Unit 22(A) is not limited by the drawing permit system. The department is concerned that without a permit system in place, overharvest of bears in this specific area is likely. Additionally, although the department does not collect brown bear and moose population data from the southern portion of Unit 22(A), the moose population appears stable and supports a 90 day resident season and a 30 day nonresident season. .

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to private parties. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 18 – 5 AAC 85.056. Hunting seasons and bag limits for wolf. *Note: In the proposal book, this proposal is listed under: 5 AAC 85.060. Hunting seasons and bag limits for fur animals.*

PROPOSED BY: Virgil Umphenour.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal extends the wolf hunting season in Unit 22 by 31 days. The new season would be Aug. 1- May 31.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The regulations in Unit 22 are:

5 AAC 85.056. Hunting seasons and bag limits for wolf.

<u>Units and Bag Limits</u>	<u>Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)</u>	<u>Nonresident Open Season</u>
Units 22 and 23		
20 wolves	Aug. 1 - Apr. 30	Aug. 1 - Apr. 30

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Wolf hunting would be extended an additional 31 days in the spring.

BACKGROUND: The department does not have a Unit 22 wolf population estimate. However, anecdotal reports from the public and big game aerial surveys suggest wolf numbers have increased during recent years and wolves are now seen in all areas of the Seward Peninsula, including the Nome road system.

Wolf harvests in Unit 22 are primarily the result of trapper effort and opportunistic harvest by hunters. Hunters take wolves while they are in pursuit of other big game or while recreating. Reporting is achieved through the completion of fur sealing certificates, although household surveys have documented additional take of wolves resulting from local harvest patterns and home tanning practices or uses of pelts.

Sealing certificates from RY1995-RY2012 show 82% (n=575) of the wolves are taken by firearm, 10% (n=70) by trapping, and 8% (n=58) by other or unknown methods. Since ground-shooting can be reported by trappers, only a portion of the harvest by “firearm” is attributable to hunter harvest. Data indicate 68% (n=475) of the reported wolf harvest is between February through April. March has the highest harvest (n=204) likely because of longer daylight hours and favorable snow travel conditions that make it easier to hunt.

Extending the hunting season into May will overlap with the reproductive period of wolves. Females attend to pups in dens in May. Maternal females are probably not as vulnerable to hunting because they are closely tied to dens, but they are dependent on pack members to provide food for them and their pups. These factors suggest that harvests of pack members or denning females will likely impact pup survival. Additionally, most wolves spend substantial time near dens in May making them vulnerable to harvest if dens are discovered by hunters. Extended seasons are not recommended because the department anticipates that hunting in May will result in higher harvests and an increased likelihood of orphaned

pups. Most wolf hunting seasons statewide, outside of areas with intensive management programs, end on April 30 due to increased vulnerability during the denning period.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **OPPOSED** to extending the wolf hunting season from April 30 to May 31 in Unit 22. Potential take of wolves during the denning period should be avoided to protect the species at vulnerable times in their life-cycle.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to private parties. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 19 - 5 AAC 85.057. Hunting seasons and bag limits for wolverine. *Note: In the proposal book this proposal is listed under: 5 AAC 85.060 Hunting seasons and bag limits for fur animals.*

PROPOSED BY: Virgil Umphenour.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would extend the wolverine hunting season in Unit 22 by adding 30 days in April. The new season would be Sept. 1-Apr. 30.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The current wolverine regulations are:

<u>Units and Bag Limits</u>	<u>Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)</u>	<u>Nonresident Open Season</u>
Units 6 - 10, 12, 15, 16(B), 17, and 19 – 26	Sept. 1 - Mar. 31 (General hunt only)	Sept. 1 - Mar. 31
1 wolverine		

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If adopted, this proposal would lengthen the Unit 22 wolverine hunting season 30 days by extending the season to April 30. The season dates in April overlap with the denning period for female wolverines. In years with good snow conditions, denning areas may be easily reached by snowmachine, potentially allowing increased disturbance or take of denning females. The susceptibility of wolverines, both male and female, to harvest during the denning period combined with an increase in hunting opportunity will likely result in a higher annual reported harvest of wolverines in Unit 22.

If adopted, this proposal would extend the ending date for the hunting season later than the ending date for the trapping season, which is currently April 15, and would result in the latest ending date for wolverine hunting in the state.

BACKGROUND: Based on hunter/trapper harvests, miscellaneous observations, and trapper questionnaires, wolverines are considered common, with stable populations throughout Unit 22. Since the department does not have population numbers or abundance estimates, it uses harvest information to assess population status. Increased hunter harvest would be considered additive to natural mortality and

its impact on the Unit 22 population could be significant if females with dependent young are taken at high rates.

Wolverine harvests in Unit 22 are primarily the result of trapper effort and opportunistic harvest by hunters. Reporting is achieved through the completion of fur sealing certificates, although household surveys have documented additional take of wolverine resulting from local harvest patterns and home tanning practices or uses of pelts.

During RY2003–RY2012, the total reported harvest from Unit 22 was 391 wolverines, with an average annual reported harvest of 39. Sex of the reported harvest was 61% male, 32% female, and 7% unknown sex. Method of take in the reported harvest was 65% by trapping or snares, 30% by shooting; and 5% by unknown harvest methods. On average, 12 wolverines per year are harvested by ground shooting. Since ground-shooting can be reported by trappers, only a portion of the harvest by “shooting” is attributable to hunter harvest.

Wolverine have a low reproductive output: female wolverines do not reach sexual maturity until 1.5 years of age, and then produce their first litter at 2 years of age. Most litter sizes are 2-3 kits, although litters can range from 1-5 kits. Average life expectancy is 4-5 years but some animals have been documented reaching 13 years of age. Depending on the diversity and abundance of food or prey, wolverines may not produce their first litter at age 2, or they may skip years between litters.

The denning period for wolverines begins with the birth of kits in February and early March and extends until late May. Hunting during this time may negatively affect wolverine populations. Reproductive females are vulnerable to harvest during the denning period because they travel extensively to obtain food while attempting to meet the energetic demands of lactation. Harvesting reproductive females during the denning period can negatively affect recruitment. High rates of disturbance during the denning period may also lead to increased mortality of kits. When den sites are disturbed females often relocate kits to a secondary site or abandon their dens.

Hunting in April would likely increase the annual harvest of wolverines due to: 1) a pattern of increased use of snowmachines for recreation and hunting in April, 2) increased opportunistic harvest while hunting other big game species, and 3) increased access to potential wolverine denning areas via snowmachines, especially in years with good snow conditions for spring travel. This increased opportunity coincides with wolverine vulnerability to harvest during late winter as they seasonally increase their daily movements, particularly reproductive females supporting kits in dens.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **OPPOSED** to this proposal. Lengthening of the wolverine hunting season to April 30 will likely increase harvest, including potential take and disturbance to denning females. This should be avoided to protect the species at vulnerable times in their life-cycle. Without reliable population estimates or better estimates of future harvests, the department recommends no changes to the wolverine hunting season.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to private parties. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 20 – 5 AAC 85.045. Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

PROPOSED BY: North Slope Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal extends the bull moose season 16 days to September 30 in two areas of Unit 26(A): the portion in the Colville River drainage above and including the Anaktuvuk River drainage, and the Remainder of Unit 26(A). The new season would be Aug. 1- Sept 30.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The current regulations in general season hunts and through Controlled Use Area (CUA) restrictions for moose hunting with drawing permits are:

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

<u>Units and Bag Limits</u>	<u>Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)</u>	<u>Nonresident Open Season</u>
Unit 26(A), that portion in the Colville River drainage upstream from and including the Anaktuvuk River Drainage		
1 bull; or	Aug. 1 - Sept. 14	No open season.
1 bull by drawing permit only; up to 40 permits may be issued; up to 20 percent of the permits may be issued to nonresident hunters; or	Sept. 1 - Sept. 14	Sept. 1 - Sept. 14
1 moose; a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf	Feb. 15 - Apr. 15	No open season.
Unit 26(A), that portion west of 156° 00' W. Longitude excluding the Colville River Drainage		
1 moose; a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf	July 1 - Sept. 14	No open season.
Remainder of Unit 26(A)		
1 bull	Aug. 1 - Sept. 14	No open season.

5 AAC 92.540. Controlled use areas

In the following areas, access for hunting is controlled as specified:

...

(10) Unit 26:

(A) the Unit 26(A) Controlled Use Area:

(i) the area consists of Unit 26(A);

(ii) the area is closed to the use of aircraft for hunting moose, including the transportation of moose hunters, their hunting gear, or parts of moose from July 1 through September 14 and from January 1 through March 31, except as provided under terms of a drawing hunt permit in the area outside of that portion of Unit 26(A) bounded by a line beginning at 153° 30' W. long. on the game management boundary between Units 24 and 26(A), north along 153° 30' W. long. to 69° N. lat., east along 69° N. lat. to 152° 10' W. long., south along 152° 10' W. long. to 68° 30' N. lat., east along 68° 30' N. lat. to 150° 40' W. long., south along 150° 40' W. long. to the game management boundary between Units 24 and 26(A), and westerly along the game management unit boundary to the point of origin at 153° 30' W. long.; however, this provision does not apply to the transportation of moose hunters, their hunting gear, or parts of moose by aircraft between publicly owned airports;

...

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? It would increase the length of the general season hunt by 16 days. If the dates excluding aircraft in the Unit 26(A) CUA are not adjusted to September 30, the period of Sept. 16-Sept. 30 would allow aircraft use for moose hunting. The longer season could increase the number of bull moose harvested, with higher harvest if aircraft use is not restricted. It would make it possible for some hunters to shift their hunts later in the year when temperatures are cooler, allowing better care of meat resulting in a better product.

BACKGROUND: The fall bull moose season for the Colville River drainage above and including the Anaktuvuk River drainage and in the Remainder of Unit 26(A) has been Aug. 1 – Sept. 14 since 2006. Since that time people from the village of Nuiqsut have occasionally requested that the season be extended to the end of September.

One reason for the request is that fall temperatures have increased, making it more difficult to preserve meat than it was in past years. Hunting later when it is cooler would make it easier to take better care of moose meat. Another issue is that moose are moving from the hills to the river bottoms later because of the warmer temperatures, so hunting success along the river corridors would be greater if the season lasted longer. Another issue is aircraft noise and disturbance. During 2012, hunters felt that the high volume of helicopter air traffic related to research and exploration activities based out of Umiat on the Colville River pushed moose away from the river, making them harder to hunt.

The Unit 26(A) moose minimum population count declined from 1,180 to 610 moose between 2008 and 2011. During that time the short yearling percentage within the trend count area was 2%, 2%, and 11% in each successive year. Since that time the number of moose within the trend count area has increased slowly from 265 to 310 with 18% short yearlings. In 2012, the bull:cow ratio was 68 bulls:100 cows suggesting that small increases in the harvest of bulls are unlikely to interfere with population growth. Reported moose harvest in recent years has remained low: 13 moose in 2010, 5 in 2011, and 9 in 2012.

The longer season would provide more opportunity for hunters and may result in a modest increase in harvest. Nuiqsut hunters have stated that they would most likely shift their hunting effort to a later date with cooler temperatures, primarily so they could take better care of their meat. Some hunters may spend

more time hunting, but many would just shift their time of hunting. The desire to shift the timing of hunting trips rather than increase the number of trips helps buffer and reduce the additive harvest level associated with an extended season. Based on existing low harvests it is unlikely that harvest will increase in a manner that would substantially slow the population recovery.

Some factors that limit moose harvest are: 1) the Unit 26(A) CUA, which includes all of Unit 26A, is closed to the use of aircraft for moose hunting except under terms of a drawing permit hunt; the closure includes transporting moose hunters, gear, and moose parts, 2) the department has reduced the number of available drawing permits from 25 to 10 in recent years, and 3) the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation owns most of the land where moose are hunted on the Colville River system and they only allow residents of North Slope villages to hunt on their lands. Any increases in harvest from the extended season are anticipated to be moderated by these inherent limitations and sustainable by the increasing population.

Extending the season to September 30 without clarifying the dates associated with aircraft restrictions for moose hunting in the Unit 26(A) CUA will result in opposing aircraft regulations in the area affected by this proposal. As defined in the CUA, moose hunters would be prohibited from using aircraft in the area affected by this proposal from Aug. 1- Sept. 14, unless using a drawing permit. Then, regardless of drawing permit status, moose hunters would be allowed to use aircraft during the latter part of the moose season from Sept. 15-Sept. 30. Unless the restricted dates in the CUA are modified and aligned with the fall moose season, the use of aircraft would be allowed for transportation of moose hunters, their hunting gear, or parts of moose from Sept. 15-Sept. 30. If the use of aircraft is allowed during the proposed extended season, it would probably lead to overharvest of the population.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** an extended season with current access restrictions remaining in place within the moose season. The department **OPPOSES** an extended season without access restrictions because of the potential for overharvests. The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocations associated with access defined in the Unit 26(A) Controlled Use Area.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to private parties. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 21 - 5 AAC 95.045 Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

PROPOSED BY: David Byrd.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would make the following changes to drawing permit hunts DM980 and DM981 for moose in Unit 26(A): increase the hunt area to include hunting in the Anaktuvuk Pass Controlled Use Area (CUA), modify the bull bag limit with a restriction of 50 inch antlers or greater or antlers having three brow tines, and specify an allocation of two nonresident permits in hunt DM980 and two nonresident permits in hunt DM981.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The hunting regulations for drawing permit hunts DM980 and DM981 in Unit 26(A) and the restrictions for the use of aircraft in drawing hunts are listed below:

Resident

Units and Bag Limits (24)	Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
Unit 26(A), that portion in the Colville River drainage upstream from and including the Anaktuvuk River Drainage		
1 bull; or	Aug. 1 - Sept. 14	No open season.
1 bull by drawing permit only; up to 40 permits may be issued; up to 20 percent of the permits may be issued to nonresident hunters; or	Sept. 1 - Sept. 14	Sept. 1 - Sept. 14
1 moose; a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf	Feb. 15 - Apr. 15	No open season.

...

5 AAC 92.540. Controlled use areas

In the following areas, access for hunting is controlled as specified:

...

(10) Unit 26:

(A) the Unit 26(A) Controlled Use Area:

(i) the area consists of Unit 26(A);

(ii) the area is closed to the use of aircraft for hunting moose, including the transportation of moose hunters, their hunting gear, or parts of moose from July 1 through September 14 and from January 1 through March 31, except as provided under terms of a drawing hunt permit in the area outside of that portion of Unit 26(A) bounded by a line beginning at 153° 30' W. long. on the game management boundary between Units 24 and 26(A), north along 153° 30' W. long. to 69° N. lat., east along 69° N. lat. to 152° 10' W. long., south along 152° 10' W. long. to 68° 30' N. lat., east along 68° 30' N. lat. to 150° 40' W. long., south along 150° 40' W. long. to the game management boundary between Units 24 and 26(A), and westerly along the game management unit boundary to the point of origin at 153° 30' W. long.; however, this provision does not apply to the transportation of moose hunters, their hunting gear, or parts of moose by aircraft between publicly owned airports;

(B) the Anaktuvuk Pass Controlled Use Area:

(i) the area consists of that portion of Unit 26(A) bounded by a line beginning at 153° 30' W. long. on the game management boundary between Units 24 and 26(A), north along 153° 30' W. long. to 69° N. lat., east along 69° N. lat. to 152° 10' W. long., south along 152° 10' W. long. to 68° 30' N. lat., east along 68° 30' N. lat. to 150° 40' W. long., south along 150° 40' W. long. to the game management boundary between Units 24 and 26(A), and westerly along the game management unit boundary to the point of origin at 153° 30' W. long.;

(ii) the area is closed to the use of aircraft for hunting caribou, including the transportation of caribou hunters, their hunting gear, or parts of caribou from August 15 through October 15;

however, this provision does not apply to the transportation of caribou hunters, their hunting, gear, or parts of caribou by aircraft between publicly owned airports;

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If the use of aircraft were allowed for moose hunting in the Anaktuvuk Pass CUA it would increase the amount of air traffic in the CUA. The Anaktuvuk Pass CUA was created north of the village because residents felt that air traffic affected caribou movements through Anaktuvuk Pass. Adopting the proposal in a manner that allows aircraft use in this area would require changes to the aircraft restrictions for drawing permits contained in the Unit 26(A) CUA.

Changing the bag limit for the drawing permit hunt to 1 bull with antlers 50 inches or greater or having three brow tines would probably have little impact on the population or harvest from the population. Nonresident hunters typically attempt to find large bulls, but this change might cause a few unsuccessful hunts if a large bull was not found by the hunter.

Changing the number of drawing permits allocated to nonresidents would reduce the number of permits available to residents. The moose population continues to be at low numbers and a combined total of 10 permits have been available to residents and nonresidents. If the department continues issuing 10 drawing permits, dedicating 4 permits to nonresidents would significantly change the part of the regulations that *says up to 20% of the permits may be issued to nonresident hunters.*

If this proposal was adopted, the board should evaluate whether reasonable opportunities for subsistence uses of caribou in the Anaktuvuk Pass CUA will be affected.

BACKGROUND: The Unit 26(A) CUA, which includes all of Unit 26A, is closed to the use of aircraft for moose hunting except under terms of a drawing permit hunt, including transporting moose hunters, gear, and moose parts.

In 2005 the board initiated a resident drawing permit hunt with up to 40 permits, a bag limit of 1 bull, and aircraft use allowed. The drawing permit exception allowing use of aircraft was part of the Unit 26(A) CUA language. Additionally the Anaktuvuk River CUA was established, which made it illegal to use aircraft to hunt caribou from Aug. 15-Oct. 15. At the same time the Anaktuvuk River CUA was closed to the use of aircraft to hunt moose.

In 2007 the board added a nonresident component to the drawing permit hunt, with up to 20 percent of available permits to be allocated to nonresidents. The board also expanded the Anaktuvuk River closure area (now called the Anaktuvuk Pass CUA) to include a large rectangular area extending farther west into the Chandler River drainage and clarified their intent that the use of aircraft would not be allowed in the CUA for the moose drawing permit hunt.

In 2007 the department divided the drawing permit area into three areas: DM980 (Colville River), DM981 (Anaktuvuk River), and DM982 (Chandler River). There were a total of 20 resident and 5 nonresident permits issued. In 2010 the number of areas was reduced to two areas: DM980 (Colville River) and DM981 (Chandler and Anaktuvuk rivers) with the total number of permits staying the same.

The number of moose counted in the trend count area declined by 60% between 2007 and 2010 and the department reduced the number of permits issued to 5 drawing permits for each area (total of 10).

Residents and nonresidents were put in the same drawing and up to 1 nonresident could be selected for each area. Based on the random process it was possible for residents to receive all the permits if they were drawn before a nonresident was picked while permits were being awarded. The moose population has grown slowly in last 2 years but still remains low enough to limit the number of permits to a combined total of 10 permits.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on allocation of drawing permits and the CUA requirements (aircraft use) requested in the proposal. The department will continue to adjust the number of permits based on the available harvest determined by the status of the moose population.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to private parties. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 22 - 5 AAC 85.045(a)(24). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal reauthorizes the antlerless moose season in Unit 26A.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The antlerless regulations are:

<u>Units and Bag Limits</u> (24)	<u>Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)</u>	<u>Nonresident Open Season</u>
Unit 26(A), that portion in the Colville River drainage upstream from and including the Anaktuvuk River Drainage		
1 bull; or	Aug. 1 - Sept. 14	No open season.
1 bull by drawing permit only; up to 40 permits may be issued; up to 20 percent of the permits may be issued to nonresident hunters; or	Sept. 1 - Sept. 14	Sept. 1 - Sept. 14
1 moose; a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf	Feb. 15 - Apr. 15	No open season.
Unit 26(A), that portion west of		

156° 00' W. Longitude excluding
the Colville River Drainage

1 moose; a person may not take
a calf or a cow accompanied
by a calf

July 1 - Sept. 14

No open season.

...

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Two areas in Unit 26A would have antlerless moose seasons reauthorized: 1) the Colville River drainage upstream from and including the Anaktuvuk River drainage; and 2) the portion of Unit 26A west of 156° 00' W longitude and north of the Colville drainage.

BACKGROUND: The moose population is low in Unit 26(A) and has declined since 2008. The minimum population count was 1,180 in 2008, then declined to 610 moose in 2011. Since that time the number of moose within the Colville River trend count area has increased slowly from 265 to 308 with 18% short yearlings. The most recent bull:cow ratios have been 68 bulls:100 cows suggesting that low levels of harvest are unlikely to impede population growth. Reported moose harvest in recent years has remained low: 13 moose in 2010, 5 in 2011, and 9 in 2012.

In the portion of the Colville River drainage upstream of and including the Anaktuvuk River drainage a winter hunt with a bag limit of one moose was established in RY2005 by the Board of Game. The antlerless bag limit restricted the take of calves and cows accompanied by calves. This area is remote and inaccessible and has low harvests of antlerless moose. Reported harvest has been two cows in 2006, three cows in 2007, one cow in 2008, one in 2009, and no cows in 2010-2012. A similar low harvest is anticipated for the RY2013. The low rate of antlerless moose harvest (zero-three per year) in the Colville River drainage should not prevent the population from recovering and we recommend reauthorization of the antlerless moose season in this area.

The portion of Unit 26(A) west of 156° 00' W longitude and north of the Colville drainage has a sparse distribution of moose. Animals dispersing away from the major river drainages to the coastal plain are the only moose available for harvest in this northwestern portion of Unit 26A. The small number of antlerless moose harvested under this reauthorization proposal will have very little impact on the size of the population. To date, after several years of hunting, few antlerless moose have been harvested in this portion of the unit. One cow was harvested in 2006, none in 2007, one in 2008, and none in 2009 -2012 during this hunt. Keeping an antlerless moose season in this portion of Unit 26A is a way to provide opportunity in portion of the state where moose have sparse populations.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal as antlerless harvests are anticipated to be low and within sustained yield limits.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to private parties. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 23 – 5 AAC 99.025(a)(4). Customary and traditional uses of game populations.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? The proposal provides the board with the opportunity to consider the customary and traditional use worksheet developed by the department to make a determination as to whether there are customary and traditional uses of the Teshekpuk Lake caribou herd (TCH). If the board determines that there are customary and traditional uses of TCH for subsistence, then this proposal provides the board with the opportunity to find an amount reasonably necessary for subsistence uses.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Previous customary and traditional use worksheets were provided to the board in 1990 and 1993, but no findings were made at that time. As a result, presently there is no determination of whether the TCH is associated with subsistence uses and no amount reasonable necessary for subsistence has been established.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If the board determined that there are customary and traditional uses of TCH caribou, the board would then need to find an amount reasonably necessary for subsistence and adopt regulations that provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses of the Teshekpuk Lake caribou herd.

BACKGROUND: The Alaska Board of Game was first presented a customary and traditional use (C&T) worksheet for consideration of the customary and traditional uses of the TCH in 1990. The administrative record does not report whether a C&T determination was made at the 1990 board meeting. This same C&T worksheet was revised for the 1993 board meeting and stated:

[B]ecause the Teshekpuk Caribou Herd is not specifically identified in current hunting regulations, there is no specific harvest ticket for this herd, and because so little is actually known about its seasonal movements over time, little information on any hunting of this herd is actually available. Based on caribou harvest ticket returns from Unit 26A, it appears that there is little hunting of the herd by non-North Slope residents (within its central range around the Teshekpuk Lake) because of difficult access.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to private parties. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 24 - 5 AAC 85.060. Hunting seasons and bag limits for fur animals

PROPOSED BY: Kotzebue Sound Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Change the hunting season and bag limit for coyote in Unit 26(A) from Sept. 1 - Apr. 30 and 2 coyotes to a no closed season and no bag limit.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The current coyote hunting regulations are:

Resident

<u>Units and Bag Limits</u>	<u>Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)</u>	<u>Nonresident Open Season</u>
(1) Coyote		
Units 1 - 5, 18, 22, 23, and 26(A)		
2 coyotes	Sept. 1 - Apr. 30 (General hunt only)	Sept. 1 - Apr. 30
Units 6 - 17, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26(B), and 26(C)		
No limit	July 1 - June 30	July 1 - June 30

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal would create a no closed season/no limit regulation in Unit 26(A), similar to Units 26(B) and 26(C). Allowing a no closed season would provide additional opportunity and discourage the establishment of coyote populations in northern Alaska. Coyotes are rarely seen or harvested in Unit 26(A) and there would be very little effect on harvest from this proposal. This change would also simplify hunting regulations.

BACKGROUND: Coyote sightings were first recorded in northwest Alaska and north of the Brooks Range in the 1940s. The species is expanding its range into northern Alaska and the department has no population counts and only very few harvest records in this portion of the state. Few coyotes have been seen or harvested in Unit 26(A). A liberal season and bag limit would provide useful hunting opportunity as coyotes expand their range. Little else is known about their population status or distribution in the unit.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal and alignment with regulations in Units 26(B) and 26(C).

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to private parties. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 25 – 5 AAC 85.050 (a)(2). Hunting seasons and bag limits for muskoxen.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would expand the Unit 23 Tier II subsistence muskox hunt (TX107) hunt area to include the entire Noatak River drainage and all areas north and west of the Kobuk River drainage.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

Resident

<u>Units and Bag Limits</u>	<u>Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)</u>	<u>Nonresident Open Season</u>
(2)		
...		
Unit 23, that portion north and west of the Noatak River		
1 bull by Tier II subsistence hunting permit only; up to 15 bulls may be taken	Aug. 1 - Mar. 15 (Subsistence hunt only)	No open season.
Remainder of Unit 23	No open season.	No open season.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The hunt area in the northern part of Unit 23 would change from the area north and west of the Noatak River to include the complete Noatak River drainage and all areas north and west of the Kobuk River drainage. Muskox have increased their distribution in this portion of Unit 23 and the new boundary ensures the full range of the population in Unit 23 would be available to harvest.

BACKGROUND: The original hunt boundary was arbitrarily defined as that portion of Unit 23 north and west of the Noatak River. Through time, their range has expanded to include areas south and east of the river. This change will enable hunters to take muskoxen throughout the Noatak drainage.

Muskox were introduced into northwest Unit 23 at Cape Thompson in 1970. Subsequent population growth was relatively slow and localized as the herd occupied new habitat. At the time the first subsistence hunt opened, animals were primarily distributed north and west of the Noatak River so this feature became the hunt area boundary. Currently, their range has expanded throughout the Noatak River drainage and now occupies a much larger area that encompasses the area north and west of the Kobuk River drainage.

The population peaked at 370 muskox in 2005 and was recently estimated at 220 muskox in 2012. The limited size of the population will require conservative harvest rates of less than 3% yielding a harvestable surplus of 6 bulls per regulatory year. Since the available harvestable surplus is less than the ANS finding of 18-22 muskox for this population, the harvest strategy should remain a Tier II subsistence hunt (TX107) in the future. Enlarging the hunt area does not change the population size or available harvestable surplus, so Tier II management will need to continue until population increases are observed.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal because it increases the size of the hunt area allowing a greater portion of the muskoxen population to be available to hunters.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to private parties. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 26 – 5 AAC 85.045(a)(21). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would reauthorize the antlerless moose season in Unit 23.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

<u>Units and Bag Limits</u> (21)	<u>Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)</u>	<u>Nonresident Open Season</u>
Unit 23, that portion north of and including the Singoalik River Drainage		
RESIDENT HUNTERS: 1 moose by registration permit only; however, antlerless moose may be taken only from Nov. 1 – Dec 31; a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf; or	July 1 - Dec. 31	
1 bull with 50-inch antlers or antlers with 4 or more brow tines on one side	Sept. 1 - Sept. 20	
NONRESIDENT HUNTERS: 1 bull with 50-inch antlers or antlers with 4 or more brow tines on one side by drawing permit only; up to 125 permits may be issued in all of Unit 23		Sept. 1 - Sept. 20
Remainder of Unit 23		
RESIDENT HUNTERS: 1 moose by registration permit only; however, antlerless moose may be taken only from Nov. 1 – Dec. 31; a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf; or	Aug. 1 - Dec. 31	
1 bull with 50-inch antlers or antlers with 4 or more brow tines on one side	Sept. 1 - Sept. 20	

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:
1 bull with 50-inch antlers or
antlers with 4 or more brow tines
on one side by drawing permit
only; up to 125 permits may be
issued in all of Unit 23

Sept. 1 - Sept. 20

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Resident hunters would be able to harvest antlerless moose during November and December on state-managed lands in Unit 23.

BACKGROUND: Antlerless moose seasons must be reauthorized annually. The resident registration permit hunt was implemented in RY2004 as a way to retain antlerless opportunity through substantially shortened seasons limiting antlerless harvest to the months of November and December. Antlerless seasons and bag limits have not changed since RY2004 and the reported harvest of antlerless moose has been approximately 10-12 cows annually over the last 20 years. The low antlerless moose harvest rates allow additional harvest opportunity for resident hunters without negatively impacting the moose population.

Aerial censuses indicate low moose densities prevail throughout Unit 23; however, the probable take of a few antlerless moose is not expected to be detrimental to the population.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal to reauthorize antlerless harvests in Unit 23.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to private parties. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 27 – 5 AAC 85.020. Hunting season and bag limits for brown bear.

PROPOSED BY: National Parks Conservation Association.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would limit brown bear harvest on National Park Service (NPS) managed land in Unit 23 to a three-year mean of less than 8% of the population based upon NPS brown bear population estimates. The \$25 resident brown bear tag fee would be reinstated. The general hunt bag limit would be changed to one bear every four years.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The current regulations are:

<u>Units and Bag Limits</u>	<u>Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)</u>	<u>Nonresident Open Season</u>
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(21)

Unit 23

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 bear every regulatory year
by registration permit Aug. 1 - May 31
(Subsistence hunt only)

1 bear every regulatory year Aug. 1 - May 31

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 bear every regulatory year Sept. 1 - Oct. 31
by drawing permit only; Apr. 15 - May 31
up to 68 permits may be issued

5 AAC 92.015 Brown bear tag fee exemptions

(a) A resident tag is not required for taking a brown bear in the following units:

...

(9) Unit 23;

(b) In addition to the units as specified in (a) of this section, if a hunter obtains a subsistence registration permit before hunting, that hunter is not required to obtain a resident tag to take a brown bear in the following units:

...

(8) Unit 23;

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Brown bear harvest opportunity on NPS managed lands would be based on NPS estimates, residents would have to pay \$25 tag fees, and the general harvest bag limit would be limited to one bear every four years. These effects would undoubtedly reduce brown bear harvests on NPS lands. Other effects of reduced bear harvest could be increased bear-human conflicts and increased predation on moose.

BACKGROUND: Since the 1987 mark-recapture brown bear census work was completed in the Red Dog Mine area of Unit 23, our understanding of brown bear population status has been based on qualitative information from local residents, some long-term commercial operators, and opportunistic observations of agency staff. In 2008, the NPS, with substantial contributions from the department, conducted a paired sample census in the lower Noatak River. This area included the Red Dog Mine brown bear census area of 1987. Final results of the 2008 census are not yet available from NPS; however, a minimum count of the 1987 census area shows a density of 1.9-2.2 adult bears (age 2+) per 26 mi². The 1987 census estimated a density of only 1 adult bear per 26 mi².

Harvest data for Unit 23 show no trend in the sex ratio, age, or size of bears harvested under all types of hunts.

Qualitative information also supports the potential for an increased number of bears. There have been substantial changes in ungulates in recent decades and possibly more salmon available to bears in

spawning areas resulting from a decline in commercial fisheries operations. These factors would help provide an ample food supply to support a growing bear population.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **OPPOSED** to this proposal because qualitative information suggests that current harvest levels are not limiting size of the brown bear population, and additional harvest restrictions are not necessary.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal would potentially result in an increased cost to private persons because resident tag fees would be an added expense. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 28 – 5 AAC 85.060. Hunting season and bag limits for fur animals.

PROPOSED BY: Kotzebue Sound Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would change the hunting season and bag limits for coyote in Unit 23 to no closed season and no limits.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The coyote hunting regulations are:

<u>Units and Bag Limits</u>	<u>Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)</u>	<u>Nonresident Open Season</u>
(1) Coyote		
Units 1 - 5, 18, 22, 23, and 26(A)		
2 coyotes	Sept. 1 - Apr. 30 (General hunt only)	Sept. 1 - Apr. 30
Units 6 - 17, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26(B), and 26(C)		
No limit	July 1 - June 30	July 1 - June 30

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal would create a no closed season/no limit regulation in Unit 23. Allowing a no closed season would provide additional opportunity and discourage the establishment of coyote populations in northwest Alaska. Coyotes are rarely or harvested seen in Unit 23 and there would be very little effect. This change would also simplify hunting regulations.

BACKGROUND: Coyote sightings were first recorded west and north of the Brooks Range in the 1940s. The species is expanding its range into northern Alaska and the department has no population counts and only very few harvest records in this portion of the state. Few coyotes have been seen or

harvested in Unit 23. A liberal season and bag limit would provide useful hunting opportunity as coyotes expand their range. Little else is known about their population status or distribution in the unit.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal because anticipated harvests are expected to be very low, and allowing hunters additional opportunity is not a conservation concern.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to private parties. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 29 – 5 AAC 92.200 (b) (4), (c) (2). Purchase and sale of game.

PROPOSED BY: Daniel Montgomery.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would allow the sale of antlers from caribou harvested in Unit 23, once they had been removed from the skull.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? A person may not purchase, sell, advertise or otherwise offer for sale, barter, advertise for barter, or otherwise offer for barter the antler of a caribou taken in Unit 23, unless the antler is a naturally shed antler or has been made into an article of handicraft.

5 AAC 92.200. Purchase and sale of game.

(a) In accordance with 16.05.920(a) and 16.05.930(e), the purchase, sale, or barter of game or any part of game is permitted except as provided in this section.

(b) Except as provided in 5 AAC 92.031, a person may not purchase, sell, advertise, or otherwise offer for sale

...

(4) the antler of a caribou taken in Unit 23, unless the antler is a naturally shed antler or has been made into an article of handicraft;

...

(c) A person may not barter, advertise for barter, or otherwise offer for barter

...

(2) the antler of a caribou taken in Unit 23, unless the antler is a naturally shed antler or has been made into an article of handicraft;

...

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? People could buy and sell antlers from caribou that had been harvested or had died of natural causes as long as they had been removed from the skull. Naturally shed antlers could continue to be bought and sold.

BACKGROUND: Limited quantities of caribou antlers have been bought and sold in Unit 23 since at least the late 1970s. The early antler trade occurred episodically as individual buyers came and went.

Some demand for hard (i.e., calcified) caribou antlers in Unit 23 occurred peripherally to the Asian antler market that focused mainly on acquiring velvet antler from reindeer. Additional demand for antlers came from a relatively narrow niche market of craftsmen who used them in cottage industries.

Beginning about 1987, the antler trade in Unit 23 changed substantially due to new buyers, market demand, and outlets for antlers. Several high volume buyers started operations that processed thousands of pounds of antlers each year. Outlets for antlers diversified: some went to the Asian medicinal market, some to mail order outlets that offered them as chandeliers or knife handles, and some were sold as raw materials to craftsmen. Buyers aggressively advertised and purchased all the antlers and horns the public could provide, for any species: caribou, moose, sheep, etc. They paid cash for sales and some buyers even patrolled the Kobuk and lower Noatak rivers to collect un-salvaged antlers. The peak period of antler sales coincided with the fall caribou migration and peak hunting period (late August through freeze up); however, at least 2 buyers purchased antlers year round.

The price paid for antlers increased substantially as demand became more competitive. In 1988, most buyers paid about \$1.25/lb for fresh antlers and less for bleached antlers. As new buyers entered the market and the country was cleaned of accumulated antlers, competition raised bulk prices to \$2.50/lb and higher, making the antlers from an average mature caribou bull worth about \$20.00 (1980s dollars). At that time, the sales from 5-6 mature bulls would buy a drum of gas, which in turn would give the seller mobility to procure more antlers. For choice parts of the antler, e.g., palmated shovels or bez tines, the price could be as high as \$20.00/lb, making a single set of large palmated caribou antlers worth a minimum of \$50.00 (in 1980s dollars). By 1997, businesses in Fairbanks and Anchorage were offering as much as \$5.50/lb for bulk, fresh antlers.

In villages with minimal cash economies, interest in selling antlers was high even at the lowest prices. Increased prices intensified interest to the point that antlers were being stolen from houses or caches and the department received a report of at least one house being broken into for the antlers inside. By 1990 there were many reports to the department about individuals “head hunting” caribou during fall migration and during the rut (when meat from bulls is unpalatable) for income through antler sales. Evidence of this activity was apparent to department staff during the caribou collaring project at Onion Portage on the Kobuk River.

At the peak of the Unit 23 antler trade in the early 1990s, local residents were divided about selling caribou antlers. No one saw harm in selling antlers that were purely an unwanted byproduct of procuring meat, and everyone recognized the value of cash in a region with few jobs. Some people were glad to be rid of antlers they considered a nuisance. In contrast, many people were deeply concerned that the lure of cash could tempt responsible individuals to compromise subsistence needs and harvests by engaging in excessive take to achieve quick income. Although the Western Arctic caribou herd (WAH) was large and still growing at that time, there was concern that cash incentives to harvest caribou combined with basic needs for meat could threaten the health of this herd once it declined. Some individuals were concerned that once people became accustomed to deriving income from antlers it would be very difficult to eliminate it for any reason.

In October 1990, the Kotzebue Sound Fish and Game Advisory Committee submitted a proposal (43) to ban the sale of caribou antlers in Unit 23. The board passed the proposal with an amendment to allow the sale of antlers that had been made into an article of handicraft. This regulation went into effect in

RY1991. In 1998, the board considered four proposals (31-34) regarding antler sales in Unit 23. The board passed an amended version of Proposal 33 to allow the sale of naturally shed antlers as long as the traded portion had the pedicel attached. The term “handicraft” was also clarified at this meeting.

There are several new biological considerations of the WAH that are relevant to this issue: 1) the herd has declined 4-6% annually since around 2003; 2) the bull:cow ratio has slowly declined since the early 1990s; and 3) since around 2000, the WAH has initiated the fall migration 2-6 weeks later than during the 1980s and 1990s.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal because there are regulations in place to prevent waste through required salvage of meat. The current regulation was proposed and adopted to remove any incentives for waste and, ultimately, to help conserve this herd. The later migration timing is relevant because, in recent years, many communities in Unit 23 have not had access to caribou until after bulls have entered rut. Any incentive to harvest bulls once they have become unpalatable could increase the likelihood of waste.

Unit 23 is unique in that it is the only unit in Alaska where hundreds of thousands of caribou cross major rivers during the fall migration, making most of the herd accessible to hunters every year. Even a small minority of irresponsible individuals seeking economic gain could do tremendous damage to this herd in a short time. Although the state specifically prohibits the waste of wildlife (5 AAC 92.220), Department of Public Safety staff are spread thin during the fall hunting season in Unit 23.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal may result in economic impacts to private persons; although there would be no increase in costs to private parties. Considering the high harvest of caribou in Unit 23 (approaching 10,000 annually), the total value of antler sales could easily reach many thousands of dollars. Sales through internet marketing and the ability to reach numerous small markets worldwide may lead to a more stable market than in the past.

Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 30 – 5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep.

PROPOSED BY: Leonard Jewkes

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would open the resident sheep season ten days before the nonresident season in the Arctic/Western Region (Units 23 and 26A in Region V).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Sheep hunting in the Arctic and Western Region (Region V) is limited to seasons in Unit 23 and Unit 26(A). In areas where sheep populations occur, residents can participate in subsistence registration hunts (Aug. 10-Apr. 30 for 1 sheep or Aug. 1-Apr. 30 for 3 sheep, depending on the area), general season hunts (Aug. 10-Sept. 20, full-curl ram), and drawing permit hunts (Aug. 10-Sept. 20, full-curl ram). Nonresidents can participate in general season hunts (Aug. 10-Sept. 20, full-curl ram), and drawing permit hunts (Aug. 10-Sept. 20, full-curl ram).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal attempts to reduce crowding during the early part of the sheep season by providing resident hunters with

an earlier opening date. If passed it may alleviate some conflicts between users by providing more opportunity for Alaska residents; however, it may lengthen the overall period of crowding by creating two opening dates. A lengthened season could increase harvests and increase the complexity of state sheep hunting regulations. Nonresident hunters and guides may feel disadvantaged by an early opening for resident hunters.

BACKGROUND: This proposal is an allocation issue to be determined by the board. Board policy (2007-173-BOG) indicates that allocations for specific hunts will be decided individually, based upon historical patterns of nonresident and resident permit use over the past 10 years. The board can allocate hunting opportunity between resident and nonresident hunters by modifying season dates or by allocating permits. Similar requests for allocation of sheep hunting opportunity has been addressed previously by the board at meetings covering Region III and Region IV.

This proposal would pertain to sheep hunting seasons in Units 23 and 26(A). For populations in these units the board has made customary and traditional use findings for sheep in Units 23 and 26, as follows:

5 AAC 99.025. Customary and traditional uses of game populations

<u>SPECIES & UNIT</u>	<u>FINDING</u>	<u>AMOUNT REASONABLY NECESSARY FOR SUBSISTENCE USES</u>
(10) Dall Sheep		
...		
Units 23 and 26(A), that portion west of the Etivluk River (DeLong Mountains)	positive	0 – 9
Unit 23 (Baird Mountains)	positive	18 – 47
Unit 23 and Unit 26(A), that portion east of the Etivluk River (Schwotka Mountains)	positive	2 – 4
Units 23, 24, 25(A), and 26 (Brooks Range)	positive	75 – 125
...		

Sheep harvests in Units 23 and 26(A) are generally low with harvest reports obtained through subsistence registration permits, general season harvest ticket hunts, and up to 11 permits in the drawing hunt. During 2006-2012, the average combined sheep harvest for Units 23 and 26A was 12 sheep annually (range 8-14). Since 2006, no sheep have been taken under the general hunt in Unit 23. In Unit 26(A) there has been an annual average of 14 hunters taking an average of 5 sheep per year.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. This proposal closely mirrors similar proposals regarding sheep throughout Alaska. The board has established a committee to evaluate this and other sheep management options over the next year.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to private parties. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 31 – 5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep.

PROPOSED BY: Tom Lamal.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would open the resident sheep season seven days before the nonresident season in the Arctic/Western Region (Units 23 and 26A in Region V). It would do this by opening the resident sheep season August 5, and opening the nonresident sheep season August 12. Both seasons would close September 20. This would also prohibit hunters who hunt sheep in Region V from hunting sheep in any other region in Alaska.

This proposal offers an alternative to administer all nonresident sheep hunts through permit hunts (it does not specify whether these would be registration or drawing permit hunts). The number of nonresident permits would be 15% of the total sheep harvest from the previous year.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Sheep hunting in the Arctic and Western Region (Region V) is limited to seasons in Unit 23 and Unit 26(A). In areas where sheep populations occur, residents can participate in subsistence registration hunts (Aug. 10-Apr. 30 for 1 sheep or Aug. 1-Apr. 30 for 3 sheep, depending on the area), general season hunts (Aug. 10-Sept. 20, full-curl ram), and drawing permit hunts (Aug. 10-Sept. 20, full-curl ram). Nonresidents can participate in general season hunts (Aug. 10-Sept. 20, full-curl ram), and drawing permit hunts (Aug. 10-Sept. 20, full-curl ram).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal attempts to standardize sheep season openings among regions of the state to reduce early season crowding by staggering the opening dates. If passed it may alleviate some conflicts between users by providing more opportunity for Alaska residents; however, it may lengthen the overall period of crowding by creating two opening dates. It would lengthen the overall sheep hunting season and could increase harvest levels. It would increase the complexity of state sheep hunting regulations. Nonresident hunters and guides would probably feel disadvantaged by an early opening for resident hunters.

The alternative limiting nonresidents to 15% of drawing permits would effectively change the nonresident participation from 6 drawing permits to 2 drawing permits combined for Units 23 and 26(A).

BACKGROUND: This proposal is an allocation issue to be determined by the board. Board policy (2007-173-BOG) indicates that allocations for specific hunts will be decided individually, based upon historical patterns of nonresident and resident permit use over the past 10 years. The board can allocate hunting opportunity between resident and nonresident hunters by modifying season dates or by allocating permits. Similar requests for allocation of sheep hunting opportunity has been addressed previously by the board at meetings covering Region III and Region IV.

This proposal would pertain to sheep hunting seasons in Units 23 and 26(A). For populations in these units the board has made customary and traditional use findings for sheep in Units 23 and 26, as follows:

5 AAC 99.025. Customary and traditional uses of game populations

<u>SPECIES & UNIT</u>	<u>FINDING</u>	<u>AMOUNT REASONABLY NECESSARY FOR SUBSISTENCE USES</u>
(10) Dall Sheep		
...		
Units 23 and 26(A), that portion west of the Etivluk River (DeLong Mountains)	positive	0 – 9
Unit 23 (Baird Mountains)	positive	18 – 47
Unit 23 and Unit 26(A), that portion east of the Etivluk River (Schwotka Mountains)	positive	2 – 4
Units 23, 24, 25(A), and 26 (Brooks Range)	positive	75 – 125

...

Sheep harvests in Units 23 and 26(A) are generally low with harvest reports obtained through subsistence registration permits, general season harvest ticket hunts, and up to 11 permits in the drawing hunt. During 2006-2012, the average combined sheep harvest for Units 23 and 26A was 12 sheep annually (range 8-14). Since 2006, no sheep have been taken under the general hunt in Unit 23. In Unit 26(A) there has been an annual average of 14 hunters taking an average of 5 sheep per year. The alternative to require nonresident sheep hunts to be administered through permits and capping them to 15% of the previous years' harvest would reduce the number of nonresident sheep hunters by about two thirds. Based on a harvest of 12 sheep annually, the 15% cap on permits would make approximately 2 permits available to nonresidents.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. This proposal closely mirrors similar proposals regarding sheep throughout Alaska. The board has established a committee to evaluate this and other sheep management options over the next year.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to private parties. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 32 – 5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep.

PROPOSED BY: Alaskan Bowhunters Association

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would create a new bow hunting only season for Dall sheep in the Arctic/Western Region where general sheep hunts currently exist. Season dates would be

August 1-9 (immediately before general sheep seasons begin). Participation would be limited to IBEP certified bow hunters only.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Sheep hunting in the Arctic and Western Region (Region V) is limited to seasons in Unit 23 and Unit 26(A). In areas where sheep populations occur, residents can participate in subsistence registration hunts (Aug. 10-Apr. 30 for 1 sheep or Aug. 1-Apr. 30 for 3 sheep, depending on the area), general season hunts (Aug. 10-Sept. 20, full-curl ram), and drawing permit hunts (Aug. 10-Sept. 20, full-curl ram). Nonresidents can participate in general season hunts (Aug. 10-Sept. 20, full-curl ram), and drawing permit hunts (Aug. 10-Sept. 20, full-curl ram).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal would establish a separate bow hunting season for sheep as a way to reduce crowding during the opening of general hunt sheep seasons. Crowding would only be reduced if bow hunters did not participate in general season hunts as well. If bow hunters participate in both the bow and general seasons hunts, this would merely lengthen sheep hunting by adding a ten day bow hunting season. This proposal, if passed, could allow bow hunters to occupy locations and make them unavailable to general season hunters, potentially increasing conflicts. This change would make hunting regulations more complicated in each unit. Archery harvests are typically very low, so the lengthened season would have minimal effect on total sheep harvest.

BACKGROUND: This proposal is an allocation issue to be determined by the board. Board policy (2007-173-BOG) indicates that allocations for specific hunts will be decided individually, based upon historical patterns of nonresident and resident permit use over the past 10 years. The board can allocate hunting opportunity between resident and nonresident hunters by modifying season dates or by allocating permits. Similar requests for allocation of sheep hunting opportunity to bow hunters has been addressed previously by the board at Statewide meetings.

This proposal would pertain to sheep hunting seasons in Units 23 and 26(A). For populations in these units the board has made customary and traditional use findings for sheep in Units 23 and 26, as follows:

5 AAC 99.025. Customary and traditional uses of game populations

<u>SPECIES & UNIT</u>	<u>FINDING</u>	<u>AMOUNT REASONABLY NECESSARY FOR SUBSISTENCE USES</u>
(10) Dall Sheep		
...		
Units 23 and 26(A), that portion west of the Etivluk River (DeLong Mountains)	positive	0 – 9
Unit 23 (Baird Mountains)	positive	18 – 47
Unit 23 and Unit 26(A), that portion east of the Etivluk River (Schwatka Mountains)	positive	2 – 4

Units 23, 24, 25(A), and 26
(Brooks Range)

positive

75 – 125

...

Sheep harvests in Units 23 and 26(A) are generally low with harvest reports obtained through subsistence registration permits, general season harvest ticket hunts, and up to 11 permits in the drawing hunt. During 2006-2012, the average combined sheep harvest for Units 23 and 26A was 12 sheep annually (range 8-14). Since 2006, no sheep have been taken under the general hunt in Unit 23. In Unit 26(A) there has been an annual average of 14 hunters taking an average of 5 sheep per year.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. This proposal closely mirrors similar proposals regarding sheep throughout Alaska. The board has established a committee to evaluate this and other sheep management options over the next year.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to private parties. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 33 – 5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep.

PROPOSED BY: Vern Fiehler

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would require all nonresident sheep hunts in the Arctic/Western Region to be administered through drawing permits. It would cap the number of nonresident permits to a maximum of 10% of the annual ten year average sheep harvest in Region V.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Sheep hunting in the Arctic and Western Region (Region V) is limited to seasons in Unit 23 and Unit 26(A). In areas where sheep populations occur, residents can participate in subsistence registration hunts (Aug. 10-Apr. 30 for 1 sheep or Aug. 1-Apr. 30 for 3 sheep, depending on the area), general season hunts (Aug. 10-Sept. 20, full-curl ram), and drawing permit hunts (Aug. 10-Sept. 20, full-curl ram). Nonresidents can participate in general season hunts (Aug. 10-Sept. 20, full-curl ram), and drawing permit hunts (Aug. 10-Sept. 20, full-curl ram).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Based on an average annual harvest of 12 sheep in Region V, a nonresident cap of 10% permits would provide only one drawing permit for hunts in Units 23 and 26(A), compared to a previous average of 6 nonresidents per year under current regulations.

BACKGROUND: This proposal is a nonresident allocation issue to be determined by the board. Board policy (2007-173-BOG) indicates that allocations for specific hunts will be decided individually, based upon historical patterns of nonresident and resident permit use over the past 10 years. The board can allocate hunting opportunity between resident and nonresident hunters by modifying season dates or by allocating permits.

This proposal would pertain to sheep hunting seasons in Units 23 and 26(A). For populations in these units the board has made customary and traditional use findings for sheep in Units 23 and 26, as follows:

5 AAC 99.025. Customary and traditional uses of game populations

<u>SPECIES & UNIT</u>	<u>FINDING</u>	<u>AMOUNT REASONABLY NECESSARY FOR SUBSISTENCE USES</u>
(10) Dall Sheep		
...		
Units 23 and 26(A), that portion west of the Etivluk River (DeLong Mountains)	positive	0 – 9
Unit 23 (Baird Mountains)	positive	18 – 47
Unit 23 and Unit 26(A), that portion east of the Etivluk River (Schwotka Mountains)	positive	2 – 4
Units 23, 24, 25(A), and 26 (Brooks Range)	positive	75 – 125

...

Sheep harvests in Units 23 and 26(A) are generally low with harvest reports obtained through subsistence registration permits, general season harvest ticket hunts, and up to 11 permits in the drawing hunt. During 2006-2012, the average combined sheep harvest for Units 23 and 26A was 12 sheep annually (range 8-14). Since 2006, no sheep have been taken under the general hunt in Unit 23. In Unit 26(A) there has been an annual average of 14 hunters taking an average of 5 sheep per year.

Nonresident participation would be reduced if the proposed 10% cap on drawing permits was implemented. During 2004-2012, there were 52 nonresidents of 331 sheep hunters in Units 23 and 26A (16%) with a hunt success rate of 71%. During this time an average 6 nonresidents hunted sheep in Units 23 (average=2) and 26(A) (average=4). Capping the number of nonresident drawing permits at 10% of that would provide for only 1 permit to be shared between Units 23 and 26(A), annually.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. This proposal closely mirrors similar proposals regarding sheep throughout Alaska. The board has established a committee to evaluate this and other sheep management options over the next year.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to private parties. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 34 – 5 AAC Chapter 85. Hunting seasons and bag limits.

PROPOSED BY: Norman Pickus.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would limit nonresident hunters to a small percentage of game harvested in Unit 26, primarily big game and the most abundant species. If adopted, it would provide additional resident opportunity to residents and would also open the resident sheep hunting season an unspecified number of days before the nonresident sheep season.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The game species potentially affected by this proposal include: brown bear, caribou, moose, sheep, wolf, wolverine, a variety of fur animals, and small game species. Two species have subsistence hunts that are limited to residents (brown bear and sheep), two species have nonresidents drawing permits (moose and sheep), and five species have general season hunts open to nonresidents (brown bear, caribou, sheep, wolf, and wolverine).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal would provide additional resident opportunity through restrictions to nonresident participation. If adopted, resident opportunity would increase and nonresident opportunity would be reduced in Unit 26.

BACKGROUND: This proposal is an allocation issue to be determined by the board. Board policy (2007-173-BOG) indicates that allocations for specific hunts will be decided individually, based upon historical patterns of nonresident and resident permit use over the past 10 years. The board can allocate hunting opportunity between resident and nonresident hunters by modifying season dates or by allocating permits.

This proposal would pertain to game species in Unit 26. The board has made positive customary and traditional use findings for brown bear, caribou, moose, muskoxen, Dall sheep, and wolves in Unit 26.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to private parties. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 35 – 5 AAC 92.095. Unlawful methods of taking furbearers; exceptions.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Wildlife Alliance.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would prohibit the use of snares to take bears in the Arctic/Western Region (Region V).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Currently there are no regulations in effect that allow the taking of bears by trapping (traps or snares) in Region V.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal would create a regulation that prohibits the use of traps or snares to take bears in Region V, covering Units 18, 22, 23, and 26(A).

BACKGROUND: Bear snaring is permitted in predation control areas identified through intensive management programs adopted by the board. Bear snaring is not an authorized method of take in areas

outside of control programs. There are no predation control programs in Region V where bear snaring is implemented. There is no evidence of snares being used to take bears in Region V.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to private parties. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 36 – 5 AAC Chapter 85. Hunting seasons and bag limits.

PROPOSED BY: Tom Lamal.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would change drawing hunts in the Arctic/Western Region (Region V) by allocating a minimum 90% of permits to residents. Nonresidents would be allowed to receive up 10% and have a chance to receive any remaining permits not applied for by residents.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The game species with drawing permits that would be affected in Region V by this proposal include: brown bear (Units 22 and 23), moose (Units 22, 23, and 26(A)), muskoxen (Unit 18), and sheep (Units 23 and 26(A)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal would allocate at least 90% of the awarded drawing permits to residents and up to 10% to nonresidents. If nonresident awards are reduced, this proposal would potentially provide additional resident opportunity through additional permit awards.

BACKGROUND: This proposal is an allocation issue to be determined by the board. Board policy (2007-173-BOG) indicates that allocations for specific hunts will be decided individually, based upon historical patterns of nonresident and resident permit use over the past 10 years. The board can allocate hunting opportunity between resident and nonresident hunters by modifying season dates or by allocating permits.

This proposal would pertain to big game species with drawing hunts in Units 18, 22, 23, and 26(A). The board has made positive customary and traditional use findings for brown bear, moose, muskoxen, and Dall sheep in Region V.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to private parties. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 37 – 5 AAC Chapter 85. Hunting seasons and bag limits.

PROPOSED BY: Leonard Jewkes.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? ? This proposal would change drawing hunts in the Arctic/Western Region (Region V) by allocating 90% of permits to residents. Nonresidents would be allocated 10% and have a chance to receive any remaining permits on a first-come basis.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The game species with drawing permits in Region V that would be affected by this proposal include: brown bear (Units 22 and 23), moose (Units 22, 23, and 26(A)), muskoxen (Unit 18), and sheep (Units 23 and 26(A)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal would allocate at least 90% of the awarded drawing permits to residents and 10% to nonresidents. If nonresident awards are reduced from current awards, this proposal would potentially provide additional resident opportunity through additional permit awards. Nonresidents would be able to receive leftover permits on a first-come, first-served basis

BACKGROUND: This proposal is an allocation issue to be determined by the board. Board policy (2007-173-BOG) indicates that allocations for specific hunts will be decided individually, based upon historical patterns of nonresident and resident permit use over the past 10 years. The board can allocate hunting opportunity between resident and nonresident hunters by modifying season dates or by allocating permits.

This proposal would pertain to big game species with drawing hunts in Units 18, 22, 23, and 26(A). The board has made positive customary and traditional use findings for brown bear, moose, muskoxen, and Dall sheep in Region V.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to private parties. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 38 – 5 AAC 92.015(a)(4), (8), (9) & (13) and 92.015(b)(4), (7), (8) & (10). Brown bear tag fee exemptions.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? The proposal would reauthorize the current resident tag fee exemptions for brown bear in Units 18, 22, 23 and 26(A).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Brown bear tag fees are not required for residents in general season hunts and subsistence registration permit hunts in Units 18, 22, 23, and 26(A). The regulations are:

5 AAC 92.015 Brown bear tag fee exemptions

(a) A resident tag is not required for taking a brown bear in the following units:

...

(4) Units... 26;

- ...
- (8) Unit 22;
- (9) Unit 23;
- ...
- (13) Unit 18;
- ...

(b) In addition to the units as specified in (a) of this section, if a hunter obtains a subsistence registration permit before hunting, that hunter is not required to obtain a resident tag to take a brown bear in the following units:

- ...
- (4) Unit 18;
- ...
- (7) Unit 22;
- (8) Unit 23;
- ...
- (10) Unit 26(A).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The \$25 resident tag fee would not be required to hunt brown bears in Units 18, 22, 23, 26(A).

BACKGROUND: The Board of Game must reauthorize brown bear tag fee exemptions annually or the fee automatically becomes reinstated. General season hunts have had fees exempted in Unit 18 for two years, Unit 22 for 12 years, Unit 23 for seven years, and Unit 26(A) for two years. Exemptions have been implemented to allow incremental increases in harvest, additional opportunity for residents, and harvest by a wide range of users. Increased harvest is allowable because portions of these units have high bear populations. General season harvests are within sustained yield limits and previous exemptions of the resident tag fee have not caused dramatic or unexpected increases in overall harvest.

In subsistence season hunts, reauthorizations are needed for Units 18, 22, 23, and 26A where brown bear subsistence hunt requirements include: 1) a registration permit; 2) a tag fee exemption; 3) salvaging meat for human consumption; 4) no use of aircraft in Units 22, 23 and 26A; 5) no sealing requirement unless hide and skull are removed from subsistence hunt area; and 6) if sealing is required, the skin of the head and the front claws must be removed and retained by the department at the time of sealing. Continuing the tag fee exemption helps facilitate participation in the associated brown bear harvest programs maintained by the department for subsistence hunts. In all units, subsistence brown bear harvest rates are low and well within sustained yield limits and exempting the resident tag fee has not caused an increase in subsistence harvest.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal. Brown bear numbers are stable or increasing in these 4 units, and the increased harvests that result from the tag fee exemption do not present a conservation concern.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to private parties. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.
