

PROPOSAL 40: Unit 18 antlerless moose reauthorization

ISSUE: To be retained, antlerless moose seasons must be reauthorized annually. In November 2011, the Board of Game authorized antlerless moose hunts in two portions of Unit 18 through 'any moose' and antlerless moose bag limits. These hunt areas require reauthorizations:

- 1) Lower Yukon River hunt area, and
- 2) Remainder of Unit 18.

Based on the recent trend of substantial moose population growth and population parameters in the requested areas, the department recommends continuation of antlerless moose bag limit. Continuing antlerless moose harvest opportunity will benefit hunters and also help slow the growth rate of the population.

Lower Yukon River: This area is the most densely populated moose habitat in Unit 18.

- population is estimated at 3,320 moose in an area of about 1,100 square miles,
- estimated minimum density of 2.8 moose/mi²,
- recently, the population has doubled every three years (2002 – 2008),
- calf:cow ratios of 69:100 (Nov 2010),
- twinning rates estimated at 50%,
- anecdotal evidence suggests that calf survival rates remain high.

Lower Yukon River harvest summary:

- 2010-2011 total = 255; antlerless = 25
- 2011-2012 total = 230; antlerless = 19
- 2012-2013 season in progress; due to increased opportunity, we expect harvests to be slightly higher

Remainder of Unit 18: This area has under-utilized moose habitat and a growing moose population.

- population is estimated at above 6,000 moose (based on counts in 2006 and 2012),
- calf:cow ratios of 61:100 (Nov 2010),
- twinning rates estimated at 50%,
- anecdotal evidence suggests that calf survival rates remain high.

Remainder of Unit 18 harvest summary:

- 2010-2011 total = 291; antlerless = 65
- 2011-2012 total = 294; antlerless = 78
- 2012-2013 season in progress; due to increased opportunity, we expect harvests to be slightly higher

PROPOSAL 41: Reauthorize the antlerless moose seasons in Unit 22C and the Remainder of Unit 22D.

ISSUE: To be retained, antlerless moose seasons must be reauthorized annually. Two areas in Unit 22 require reauthorization:

- 1) Unit 22C, and
- 2) Remainder of Unit 22D.

Unit 22C summary information.

- recent trend of population growth, 2% annually during 2000-2010,
- current population is estimated at approximately 660 moose,
- population exceeds management goal of 450–525 moose (winter range carrying capacity),
- calf:adult ratios vary annually from 16-34ca:100ad; since 1990 the average is 24ca:100ad,
- bull:cow ratio is low, varying between 10–20 bulls:100 cows,
- additional bull harvest ill-advised,
- antlerless harvest helps stabilize population growth,
- antlerless hunt first authorized by registration permit in October 1999,
- department manages this hunt with a quota of approximately 25-30 antlerless moose; up to 30- 50 permits annually,
- harvest quotas are reached in most years.

Remainder of Unit 22D summary information.

- moose populations are stable,
- hunting pressure is low; area is remote with difficult access,
- moose population has grown 1% annually during the period 1997-2011,
- population estimates have increased from 578 moose in 1997 to 700 in 2011,
- calf:adult ratios vary annually from 14-35ca:100ad; since 1988 the average is 23ca:100ad,
- antlerless harvest is low, averaging 1 cow moose reported per year since 2000,
- village harvest survey data estimates about 5 cow moose per year (data from 2000-2001).

PROPOSAL 42: Reauthorize the antlerless moose seasons in Unit 23.

ISSUE: To be retained, antlerless moose seasons must be reauthorized annually.

Unit 23 summary information.

- moose populations are low but stable across the majority of the unit
- density is low, ranging from 0.03 – 0.59/mi² in large portions of the unit,
- bull:cow ratios vary annually from 30-55:100 cows,
- calf: adult ratios vary annually from 1 – 34ca:100ad,
- hunting pressure varies, many areas have difficult access,
- antlerless harvest is low, estimated at 5 – 15 cows per year (reported); average is 7 cows/yr,
- antlerless season was shortened on RY2004, available through RM880.

Unit 23 harvest summary:

- 2010-2011 total = 189; antlerless = 17
- 2011-2012 total = 143; antlerless = 11
- 2012-2013 season in progress; harvest is expected to be similar to RY2011

PROPOSAL 43: Reauthorize the antlerless moose seasons in Unit 26A.

ISSUE: To be retained, antlerless moose seasons must be reauthorized annually. Two areas in Unit 26A are considered by this proposal:

- 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.

Colville River Upstream Area summary information.

- moose population is increasing; previous declining trend ended in 2011,
- population estimate is 600 moose in 2011,
- bull:cow ratio of 69:100 cows based on Fall 2012 surveys,
- 17% calves based on Fall 2012 surveys,
- hunt area is remote and inaccessible,
- winter hunt for antlerless moose was established in RY2005,
- bulls shed antlers prior to season opening February 15,
- antlerless harvest (cows) ranges from 0-3 per year.

Unit 26A West summary information.

- very sparse distribution of moose in this part of unit,
- moose population is currently variable due to immigration (not a census area),
- small number of moose disperse from major rivers to the coastal plain,
- dispersing animals are primarily bulls and cows without calves, infrequently encountered,
- dispersing moose are the only harvest opportunity in this portion of the unit,
- few antlerless moose have been harvested,
- antlerless harvest ranges from 0-1/yr in the last several years.

PROPOSAL 44: Region 5 Brown Bear Tag Fee Exemption

ISSUE: The Board of Game must reauthorize brown bear tag fee exemptions annually or the fee automatically becomes reinstated. We recommend continuing resident tag fee exemptions for the general season and subsistence season hunts in Region V (Units 18, 22, 23, and 26A).

General Season Hunts: Reauthorizations are needed for:

- Unit 18, where the tag fee has been exempted for 1 year;
- Unit 22, where the tag fee has been exempted for 11 years;
- Unit 23, where the tag fee has been exempted for 6 years; and
- Unit 26A, where the tag fee has been exempted for 1 year.

Tag fee exemptions are desired to allow:

- 1) incremental increase in annual harvest,
- 2) opportunistic harvest by resident hunters, and
- 3) harvest by a wide range of users. Increased harvest is allowable because portions of these units have high bear populations.

Harvest: General season brown bear harvest rates are within sustained yield limits and exempting the resident tag fee has not caused dramatic or unexpected increases in overall harvest. Harvests show no changing trends in the sex ratio, age, or size of bears harvested under all types of hunts.

- Units 18, tag exemption was newly authorized for 2012-2013. Summary of harvest (to date) is estimated at 14 brown bears. For the previous 10-year period, reported harvest has been within sustained yield.
- Unit 22, during the tag-free period resident harvest has a 10-year average annual harvest of approximately 50 brown bears. Summary of harvest (to date) is estimated at 45 brown bears.
- Unit 23, general harvests have substantial annual variability, primarily affected by weather. The slow increasing trend in harvest since 1961 is probably most influenced by an increasing human population rather than the result of regulatory changes. Summary of harvest (to date) is estimated at 48 brown bears.
- Units 26A, tag exemption was newly authorized for 2012-2013. Summary of harvest (to date) is estimated at 26 brown bears. For the previous 10-year period, reported harvest has been within sustained yield.

Subsistence Season Hunts: Reauthorizations are needed for Units 18, 22, 23, and 26(A) where brown bear subsistence hunt requirements include:

- 1) registration permit,
- 2) tag fee exemption,
- 3) salvaging meat for human consumption,
- 4) no use of aircraft in Units 22, 23 and 26(A),
- 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 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.

- Unit 18, we estimate 1-3 bears are taken annually in subsistence hunts.
- Unit 22, about 6 bears are taken during a 10-year period and this is <1 % of the total brown bear harvest in the unit.
- Unit 23, an average of <5 bears have been harvested annually since 1992 and this is <10 % of the total brown bear harvest.
- Unit 26A, 1 5 bears are taken annually by subsistence hunters.