

Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Staff Comments

Arctic/Western Region Proposals

Alaska Board of Game Meeting

Bethel, Alaska

January 6-9, 2017



The following staff comments were prepared by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game for use at the Alaska Board of Game meeting, January 6-9, 2017 in Bethel, 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 99.025. Customary and traditional uses of game. Establish a separate ANS for the Teshekpuk Caribou Herd.

PROPOSED BY: North Slope Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would evaluate and establish an amount necessary for subsistence (ANS) that is separate from the adjacent Western Arctic caribou herd. Both herds currently have a positive customary and traditional use finding, with a combined ANS of 8,000–12,000.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

99.025 Customary and traditional uses of game populations

Species and Unit: Units 21, 22, 23, 24 and 26 (Western Arctic herd, Teshekpuk Lake herd)

Finding: positive

Amount Reasonably Necessary for Subsistence Uses: 8,000–12,000 caribou.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The primary effect of this proposal would be to establish specific thresholds for allocating hunting opportunity (Tier I, Tier II, or hunts that are open to all users) for the Teshekpuk Caribou Herd (TCH). Depending upon the approach taken, the WAH ANS could also be affected.

BACKGROUND: ANS helps the board assess if the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for success in harvesting that game population for customary and traditional uses.

Both the WAH and TCH herds have declined from peak abundance in the last decade. Although harvest levels are difficult to estimate, data from a combination of harvest tickets and modeled harvests based on systematic household surveys indicate that both herds are currently harvested at rates greater than or equal to 6%. At this point, nonresident harvest of the TCH is low, typically less than 0.5% of the total harvest.

The WAH and TCH have some seasonal overlap, as do many large caribou herds. As a result, differentiating harvest between herds can prove difficult in areas where overlap occurs and is complicated by the need for spatially explicit caribou distribution and harvest data. However, in large portions of the respective ranges of these herds, harvest can be reliably assigned to a specific herd.

Changes to seasons and bag limits instituted in RY2015 were a significant step toward reducing harvest on these herds and were the first change to resident seasons in approximately 30 years. The regulatory changes adopted were tailored to each herd based on differences in harvestable surplus estimates, harvest patterns and local desires.

Currently, the TCH is much smaller than the adjacent WAH, and the allocative regime that the TCH is in will be largely driven by the size and harvestable surplus of the WAH.

The type of hunt opportunities the board may offer on a given stock or population is determined by the relationship between harvestable surplus and the upper and lower bounds of ANS. The department will prepare a written analysis of the ANS in time for the Arctic/Western Region meeting.

This proposal is scheduled for the Arctic/Western Region meeting as Proposal 1, and the Interior/Northeast Arctic Region as Proposal 102.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal because it is allocative. The department recommends the board consider whether the regulations provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence, which is defined as “an opportunity, as determined by the appropriate board, that allows a subsistence user to participate in a subsistence hunt or fishery that provides a normally diligent participant with a reasonable expectation of success of taking of fish or game” (AS 16.05.258(f)).

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal would not result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 2 – 5 AAC 92.010 Harvest tickets and reports, and 85.025 Hunting seasons and bag limits for caribou. Modify the hunt structure for Western Arctic and Teshekpuk Caribou Herds

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would establish a registration permit hunt structure for the Western Arctic and Teshekpuk caribou herds, with no changes to seasons or bag limits.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Resident seasons and bag limits vary within the range of the WAH and TCH caribou herds (Units 21D, 22, 23, 24, 26A).

In Unit 22, caribou hunts are now administered with a registration permit (RC 800), with an annual bag limit of 20 caribou. Outside of areas where reindeer are actively herded, bulls have a year-round season, and cows are limited to July 1 – March 31. Refer to 5 AAC 85.025 or to pages 119–120 of the *2016–2017 Alaska Hunting Regulations* for area specific regulations.

For areas outside of Unit 22, there are year-round seasons, with daily bag limits that include cows, bulls or both sexes, depending upon the time of year and area. In units 23 and 26A, hunters have the option of utilizing a harvest ticket, or registering with the department if they live and hunt north of the Yukon River. In Units 24 and 21D, hunters must use a harvest ticket. Refer to 5

AAC 85.025 or to pages 115,125, 128 and 137 in the *2016–2017 Alaska Hunting Regulations* for area specific regulations.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The primary effect of the proposal would be a transition from a hunter registration system to a registration permit hunt structure. As part of this change in hunt structure the department requests the flexibility to adjust seasons and hunt areas based on seasonal access to caribou. In the long-term, the department also anticipates providing better management through increased information on harvest. There are no proposed changes to seasons or bag limits at this time.

BACKGROUND: For several decades, resident hunting regulations on the WAH and TCH have been liberal, with extensive seasons and large daily bag limits. Between 2008 and 2015, both herds declined to less than half of their peak abundances (201,000 caribou in the WAH based on a 2016 count and 41,500 caribou in the TCH based on a 2015 count). Harvestable surplus estimates for both herds have declined and model-based estimates of annual range-wide harvest, which have remained constant, may exceed what is available for harvest. The combined harvestable surplus in 2016 for the two herds, based on a 6% harvest rate, is approximately 14,500 caribou. The board has made a positive C&T finding for the WAH and TCH, and finding of 8,000–12,000 caribou, both herds combined, as the ANS.

Ensuring that harvest levels do not exceed allowable rates and further depress these populations is vital. In addition to increased information on harvest levels, the timing and sex of harvest is becoming increasingly important. A benefit of a registration permit hunt structure over the current registration system is its reporting requirement, which improves harvest reporting and promotes maximized harvest opportunity relative to what is available for harvest. The board adopted a regulation during the March 2016 meeting that changed bag limits and reporting mechanisms in Unit 22. The department anticipates that this new regulation will allow us to evaluate initial implementation of a registration hunt and a new annual bag limit in a portion of the WAH range.

There are no proposed changes to bag limits or seasons; however, additional restrictions to limit harvest with seasonal quotas, annual bag limits for one or both sexes, or changes to hunting seasons may become necessary in the future to manage these herds. These changes would be more easily implemented under the department’s discretionary authority for registration permit hunts if they are needed.

The department recognizes that full implementation of a permit hunt structure may take time. The current system requiring hunters to register with the state prior to hunting caribou has been largely unsuccessful due primarily to poor participation, particularly in outlying communities. Even though the registration permit would be available online, online applications would not alleviate administrative limitations caused by license vendors not being prevalent in the region or intermittent or absent internet access. The region as a whole has relatively little experience with

the increased reporting requirements of a registration permit, particularly in Units 23 and 26A where caribou are the most widely utilized resource in both units. Both issues will require increased administrative efforts on the part of staff and participation by the public.

The department recognizes the need to more closely monitor harvest and to have tools available for flexible hunt management. The process for crafting regulations is ongoing, but the specific regulations that will have the broadest public support are still uncertain at this time. Daily bag limits with no annual limit and extensive seasons are still desired in much of the WAH and TCH ranges.

Because of the significance of potential changes to caribou users, there is a need to establish structures and regulations that provide both a reasonable opportunity of success in taking caribou for subsistence uses and a priority for these subsistence uses, without creating a conservation concern, and to begin this process before any large changes occur. This outlook presumes that continued decline is still possible in both herds. There are positive demographic indications that the herds may be stabilizing, but now is the appropriate time to discuss specific changes.

This proposal is scheduled for the Arctic/Western Region meeting as Proposal 2, and the Interior/Northeast Arctic Region meeting as Proposal 103.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted and is **NEUTRAL** towards this proposal to establish a registration permit hunt to monitor harvest throughout the ranges of the WAH and TCH. Adoption of this proposal would provide the department with additional tools to manage the WAH and TCH in portions or all of Units 21, 23, 24, and 26; however, the department recognizes a registration permit is a significant change to historical hunt administration and acknowledges broad public support is needed for a registration permit hunt type to be effective for management. Additionally, there will be significant administrative challenges to implementing a registration permit hunt structure for these herds. The limited ability to issue permits in communities with no license vendors and limited internet access will be challenging. Hunter participation in a permit hunt structure will be a new requirement that has not been widely utilized in many of the affected areas. The department will need to engage in education and outreach to implement this hunt structure by building awareness and support for a permit hunt structure throughout the range of the WAH and TCH herds, and based on similar regulatory transitions in other portions of Region 5, we anticipate this process may take some time before a registration permit hunt type could be considered successful. Household surveys will continue to be necessary to estimate total harvest and the contexts for those harvests.

In preparation for changes that may need to be made in future regulatory years, the department needs tools to actively manage harvest over a very large area of the state if either the WAH or TCH decline to the point that current hunt management is no longer practical for one or both herds. For example, a registration permit, with broad public support would give the department the discretionary authority to open and close seasons and areas based on seasonal access to

caribou without board action. Transition from the current harvest registration system to a registration permit hunt would be a significant change to increase the department's ability to monitor harvest on a more timely basis and allow for more responsive management.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal may result in additional costs for the department resulting from efforts to distribute registration permits and other hunt administration tasks.

PROPOSAL 3 – 5 AAC 92.010 (g) Harvest tickets and reports. Remove the exception to harvest tickets and reports for caribou

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Outdoor Council

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would remove the option for hunters, who live and hunt north of the Yukon River, to register for caribou hunting with the department for general season caribou hunts, rather than using harvest tickets and harvest reports. There would be no exceptions to requiring possession of harvest tickets and obtaining harvest reports for all residents hunting caribou in hunts north of the Yukon River.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

5 AAC 92.010. Harvest tickets and reports

...

(g) For caribou, a person may not hunt caribou, except in a permit hunt, unless the person has in possession a harvest ticket and has obtained a harvest report (issued with the harvest ticket); however, a person who resides north of the Yukon River and is hunting north of the Yukon River is not required to use harvest tickets or harvest reports but must register to hunt caribou in the arctic.

...

As of regulatory year 2016, hunters in Units 21D and 24 are required to use harvest tickets, and caribou hunting in Unit 22 is now administered using a registration permit.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? All caribou hunters would need to use harvest tickets, even in the areas north of the Yukon River. Successful hunters would be required to validate the month and date of kill of each animal harvested by notching a harvest ticket and submit hunt reports to the department within 15 days after taking the legal bag limit or within 15 days after the close of the season if unsuccessful or did not hunt. Failure to possess a harvest ticket while hunting would be a wildlife violation.

The department offers the following as further clarification following the 2016 Statewide meeting. If hunters are required to use harvest tickets and reports, a reminder notice will be automatically generated for each hunter, which could result in some additional harvest reporting. Because that additional reporting would presumably come from areas where participation in the

current hunt structure is low, the additional data will still need to be supplemented with household surveys. It is unknown if participation in this system would be any higher than the current registration system, particularly in the absence of significant outreach and effort on the part of the department.

BACKGROUND: This proposal was deferred from the 2016 Statewide Regulations meeting with the intent that it apply to the Arctic/Western Region units. It was previously numbered Proposal 85. These department comments have been updated with information gathered since the March 2016 meeting.

The current registration system primarily accommodates WAH hunters in Units 18, 22, 23, and 26A. This system was developed primarily to accommodate hunters and harvest monitoring of the WAH in broad rural areas of northwest Alaska. When the department was more actively pursuing the data through follow-up efforts with registered hunters, the registration system reflected only 11% of the total harvest in communities that were evaluated (see Georgette, Susan. 1994. *Summary of Western Arctic Caribou Herd Overlays (1984-92) and Comparison with Harvest Data from Other Sources*. ADF&G, posted on the 2017 Arctic/Western meeting website). As the caribou herds grew, and harvest reporting became less critical for management, the department gradually reduced efforts to follow-up with hunters to those few areas where participation was presumed to be high enough to accurately represent harvest.

However, after the prominent decline of the WAH documented in 1976, hunting seasons were initially closed and then reopened as permit hunts for a short time. As the herd increased the permit hunts were replaced with harvest ticket hunts for a few years until it was obvious that harvest tickets were not tracking harvest, especially after higher bag limits were enacted as the herd entered a period of rapid growth. To document harvest patterns and trends, Community-based Harvest Assessments (CHA) were completed in selected communities within the range of the herd. CHA results demonstrated that harvest tickets reports were surprisingly poor tools to monitor caribou harvest, capturing less than 10% of resident harvest due to low participation in the program. At subsequent discussions during Statewide and Arctic/Western Region (Region V) board meetings, the registration approach was suggested for residents hunting the WAH in areas north of the Yukon River in Units 18, 22, 23, and 26A. To simplify the regulation and use a common boundary for harvest ticket requirements across the state, the Yukon River was used as the dividing line, even though few WAH caribou occur in the eastern portions of the area north of the Yukon River. The generalized boundary affects the following herds that occur north of the Yukon River:

- WAH and Teshekpuk caribou herds managed by the department's Region V staff (Arctic/Western Region)
- Central Arctic, Porcupine, Galena Mountain, Hodzana Hills, Wolf Mountain, and Ray Mountains caribou herds managed by the department's Region III staff (Interior/Northeast Arctic Region).

Recent harvest monitoring in the WAH and TCH has been accomplished through an annual modeling approach of CHA data applied to seasonal distribution of caribou (availability to

communities for harvest) and human population within zones where caribou are available for harvest. This was instituted because of continued poor compliance with licensing requirements, low harvest reporting, and the high confidence in CHA data. The harvest model produces an annual range-wide estimate with confidence intervals. Similar results would be very difficult to achieve if based on low use of harvest tickets, accentuated by the fact that in many places typical reporting is a challenge because basic services are reduced or lacking (e.g. postal service, internet).

At the 2016 Statewide meeting, it was determined that transitioning to a harvest ticket approach to reporting for the WAH and TCH herds was best initiated through involvement of primary participants at the Arctic/Western Region meeting in 2017 in Bethel. Compliance with more rigorous monitoring systems will require education, local understanding of procedures, vendor support, and increased presence of department staff involved with herd management. These are feasible objectives for bringing the primary participants into the public process of regulation change affecting WAH and Teshekpuk hunters.

Similar to issues presented for Proposal 2, the department recognizes that full implementation of any new reporting system will take time and educational efforts. The current system, which requires hunters to register with the state prior to hunting caribou, has been largely unsuccessful for management purposes due primarily to poor participation, particularly in outlying communities. Even though the registration permit would be available online, online applications would not alleviate administrative limitations caused by license vendors not being prevalent in the region or intermittent or absent internet access. Regardless of the mechanism for reporting harvest, increased administrative efforts on the part of staff and increased participation by the public will be necessary for success.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. Low participation, sparse vendor support, potential difficulties by hunters managing multiple harvest tickets for multiple daily bag limits, and lack of use of on-line services (e.g. on-line licensing) contribute to the likelihood that an immediate change to harvest tickets will not be very successful. The department will use the time until the next Region V meeting to bring the primary participants into the public process for the 2020 Region V meeting.

The department is asking for additional tools to manage the WAH and TCH and submitted Proposal 2 to establish a registration permit hunt structure for all hunters. More timely harvest reporting is one of the desired outcomes. Monitoring harvest and preventing it from exceeding allowable harvest rates that might further depress these populations is vital. In addition to increased information on harvest levels, the timing and sex of harvest is becoming increasingly important.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal will not result in a significant increase in costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 4 – 5 AAC 92.085. Unlawful methods of taking big game; exceptions. Institute no-fly zones for caribou hunting in Units 21D, 22, 23, 24 and 26A.

PROPOSED BY: Neil DeWitt

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would limit the use of aircraft for caribou hunting (i.e., used for transport of hunters, equipment, or meat) on Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and Monday throughout the ranges of the Western Arctic and Teshekpuk caribou herds (WAH and TCH)

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There are two controlled use areas that limit the use of aircraft when caribou hunting in the range of the WAH and TCH.

The Anaktuvuk Pass Controlled Use Area is a 3,182 mi² portion of 26A north of Anaktuvuk Pass, which is closed to the use of aircraft for caribou hunting from August 15–October 15.

The Noatak Controlled Use Area is a 1,608 mi² corridor extending 5 miles on either side of the Noatak River beginning at the mouth of the Noatak River and extending upstream to the mouth of Sapun Creek. This area is closed from August 15–September 30 to the use of aircraft in any manner for big game hunting.

There are no additional prohibitions on the use of aircraft specific to caribou hunting outside of the existing controlled use areas.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Aircraft use would be limited to certain days, concentrating caribou hunting related air traffic on the remaining days. The effect that this reallocation of flying activity would have on caribou movements, on success rates of hunters that do not use aircraft, or on the satisfaction of hunters or other caribou users is unknown. This restriction could reduce the number of fly-in hunters in the field if the remaining flight time available becomes a limiting factor.

BACKGROUND: This proposal is scheduled for the Arctic/Western Region meeting as Proposal 4 and the Interior/Northeast Arctic Region meeting as Proposal 100.

The proponent notes that there is dissatisfaction with the number of aircraft and fly-in hunters in some parts of the WAH range. Most proposals to limit the use of aircraft to hunt caribou in Region V revolve around the potential to disturb caribou migrations through aircraft activity and camp placement and increased competition for caribou crossing rivers, resulting in reduced success rates for local hunters who are primarily limited to rivers systems in the fall.

Two communities have been frequently surveyed by the Division of Subsistence, in part due to the persistence of local concerns. Noatak residents' harvests documented since 1994 show a decline in annual community harvests. In many recent years, the primary migration route of the WAH has taken caribou to the west and east of Noatak and affected local harvest success rates.

Harvests by Anaktuvuk Pass residents have been more variable. Caribou have frequently approached Anaktuvuk Pass from the west, but have infrequently used Anaktuvuk Pass itself.

The Unit 23 User Conflict Working Group was formed in 2008 to formulate recommendations to address user conflicts in the area. Recommendations have included changes in dates and places where aircraft can be used, in part to accommodate variation in caribou migration timing and routing, as well as efforts to expand the authority of the Big Game Commercial Services Board to regulate transporter activities in addition to guiding services. Actions have included enhanced inter-agency communication and a broad array of educational efforts, including the requirement for pilots involved in hunting to take an orientation course regarding big game hunting and meat transportation in Unit 23. Federal actions within the Noatak National Park and Preserve (NP&P) include a cap on commercial operators and clients as well as a delayed entry system for transporters in the western part of NP&P. In 2016, the Federal Subsistence Board passed a temporary Wildlife Special Action request to close federal lands to caribou hunters who do not qualify to participate in federal hunts.

Over the course of the last 20 years, it appears that some sources of significant conflict in Unit 23 may have declined (i.e. wasted meat, frequency of negative interactions between hunters). It is difficult to attribute those changes to specific actions. Based on harvest ticket reports, the number of visiting hunters in Unit 23 has gradually declined to approximately 60% of the average observed in the late 1990s, perhaps due to changes in caribou abundance, bag limits, or changes in the guiding and transporting businesses in the area. Educational efforts and focused law enforcement efforts may also have played significant roles.

Despite some success in reducing tensions, user conflict remains an issue in some areas of the WAH range, particularly in Unit 23 which has the greatest portion of nonlocal caribou hunters. The most recent attempts to address user conflicts was the special action request submitted by the Northwest Arctic Regional Subsistence Advisory Council to close federal lands to hunters who do not qualify to hunt caribou under federal regulations in Unit 23.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal because it does not address a biological concern and is allocative.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal would not result in additional costs to the department.

**ANALYSIS
and
RECOMMENDATION
for
BOARD OF GAME PROPOSALS 5, 6 & 7**

The department is in the process of preparing an analysis and recommendations for Proposals 5, 6, and 7 which will be provided in advance of the January 2017, Arctic/Western Board of Game meeting.

PROPOSAL 8 – 5 AAC 85.045. Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose; and 85.025. Hunting seasons and bag limits for caribou. Prohibit nonresident hunting of any prey species under intensive management in the Arctic/Western Region until harvest and population objectives are met.

PROPOSED BY: Resident Hunters of Alaska

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would prevent nonresidents from hunting any prey species in the Arctic/Western Region that is managed under an intensive management plan until the intensive management population and harvest objectives have been reached.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The board has not adopted any intensive management plans in the Arctic/Western Region so no current regulations would be affected.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If this proposal is adopted, in the case of future IM plans, hunting would be limited in areas that have intensive management plans to residents-only until the minimum intensive management population and harvest objectives for that prey species have been reached.

BACKGROUND: Intensive management programs have been considered for the Arctic/Western Region, but no programs have been adopted into regulation.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocation of hunting opportunity between resident and nonresident hunters. This proposal was also submitted for the Interior/Northeast Arctic Region meeting which would indicate that the proponent would prefer to have the regulation implemented statewide.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal would not result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 9 – 5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep. Establish a 10% nonresident sheep permit allocation.

PROPOSED BY: Jeff Barney

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would establish a 10% nonresident sheep permit allocation for the Arctic/Western Region.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The current sheep hunting regulations can be found in 5 AAC 85.055 and in the *2016-2017 Alaska Hunting Regulations*. The board recently allocated sheep hunting opportunity on a statewide basis by limiting nonresident bag limits to 1 sheep every 4 years. Resident bag limits remain 1 sheep every year for most hunts.

- Unit 23
 - Residents and nonresidents: no open season.
- Unit 26A [west of Etivluk River drainage (DeLong Mountains)]
 - Residents and nonresidents: no open season
- Unit 26A [east of and including the Etivluk River drainage, excluding Gates of the Arctic National Park]
 - Residents and nonresidents: August 1–5, one full-curl ram (youth hunt only)
 - Residents and nonresidents: August 10–September 20, one full-curl ram.
 - Residents only: August 1–April 30, 3 sheep by permit
- Unit 26A (private lands within Gates of the Arctic National Park)
 - Residents only: August 1–April 30, 3 sheep.
- Unit 26A (remainder)
 - Residents and nonresidents: August 1–5, one full-curl ram (youth hunt only)
 - Residents and nonresidents: August 10–September 20, one full-curl ram.

The board has made positive C&T findings for sheep as follows: sheep in Units 23 and 26A, that portion west of the Etivluk River (DeLong Mountains), ANS of 0–9; sheep in Unit 23, Baird Mountains, ANS of 18–47; sheep in Units 23 and 26A, that portion east of the Etivluk River (Schwotka Mountains), ANS of 2–4; and sheep in Units 23, 24, 25A, and 26 (Brooks Range), ANS of 75–125.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If this proposal is adopted, the department would limit nonresident sheep hunting opportunity to 10% of the total number of hunters who participated during the previous 3 years. The board would need to create new nonresident sheep draw hunts, limited registration hunts, or adjusted nonresident seasons to regulate nonresident hunting opportunity.

BACKGROUND: Board policy (2007-173-BOG) indicates that allocations for specific hunts will be decided individually, based upon historical patterns of nonresident and resident use over the past 10 years. The board has allocated hunting opportunity previously between resident and nonresident hunters by modifying season dates or by allocating permits (keeping in mind the preference for subsistence uses). Similar requests for board changes in allocation of sheep hunting opportunity have been addressed previously by the board at meetings covering Regions II, III, IV and V.

Excluding federal hunts in Unit 23 and Unit 26A, nonresident sheep hunters accounted for an average of 15% of the sheep hunters in Region V between RY2011 and RY2015 with an average of 4 nonresidents participating annually.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocation of sheep hunting opportunity between resident and nonresident hunters.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal would not result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 10 – 5 AAC 92.057. Special provisions for Dall sheep and mountain goat drawing permit hunts. Establish a 10% nonresident sheep permit allocation.

PROPOSED BY: Jake Sprankle

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would establish a 10% nonresident sheep permit allocation for Region V.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The current sheep hunting regulations can be found in 5 AAC 85.055 and in the *2016-2017 Alaska Hunting Regulations*. The board recently allocated sheep hunting opportunity on a statewide basis by limiting nonresident bag limits to 1 sheep every 4 years. Resident bag limits remain 1 sheep every year.

- Unit 23
 - Residents and nonresidents: no open season.
- Unit 26A [west of Etivluk River drainage (DeLong Mountains)]
 - Residents and nonresidents: no open season
- Unit 26A [east of and including the Etivluk River drainage, excluding Gates of the Arctic National Park]
 - Residents and nonresidents: August 1–5, one full-curl ram (youth hunt only)
 - Residents and nonresidents: August 10–September 20, one full-curl ram.
 - Residents only: August 1–April 30, 3 sheep by permit

- Unit 26A (private lands within Gates of the Arctic National Park)
 - Residents only: August 1–April 30, 3 sheep.
- Unit 26A (remainder)
 - Residents and nonresidents: August 1–5, one full-curl ram (youth hunt only)
 - Residents and nonresidents: August 10–September 20, one full-curl ram.

The board has made positive C&T findings for sheep as follows: sheep in Units 23 and 26A, that portion west of the Etivluk River (DeLong Mountains), ANS of 0–9; sheep in Unit 23, Baird Mountains, ANS of 18–47; sheep in Units 23 and 26A, that portion east of the Etivluk River (Schwatka Mountains), ANS of 2–4; and sheep in Units 23, 24, 25A, and 26 (Brooks Range), ANS of 75–125.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If this proposal is adopted, the department would limit nonresident sheep hunting opportunity to 10% of the total number of hunters who participated during the previous 3 years, and the allocation would include nonresidents hunting with guides and resident relatives. The board would need to create new nonresident sheep draw hunts and/or limited registration hunts to regulate nonresident hunting opportunity.

BACKGROUND: Board policy (2007-173-BOG) indicates that allocations for specific hunts will be decided individually, based upon historical patterns of nonresident and resident use over the past 10 years. The board has allocated hunting opportunity previously between resident and nonresident hunters by modifying season dates or by allocating permits (keeping in mind the preference for subsistence uses). Similar requests for board changes in allocation of sheep hunting opportunity have been addressed previously by the board at meetings covering Regions II, III, IV and V.

Excluding federal hunts in Unit 23 and Unit 26A, nonresident sheep hunters accounted for an average of 15% of the sheep hunters in Region V between RY2011 and RY2015 with an average of 4 nonresidents participating annually.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocation of sheep hunting opportunity between resident and nonresident hunters.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal would not result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 11 - 5 AAC 92.010 (h). Harvest tickets and reports. Remove the exception for harvest tickets and reports for sheep.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Outdoor Council

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Remove the option for hunters to register with the department in place of required harvest tickets and harvest reports if they hunt Dall sheep in Gates of the Arctic National Park (GAAR). There would be no exceptions to requiring possession of harvest tickets and obtaining harvest reports for all sheep hunters in the GAAR.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

5 AAC 92.010. Harvest tickets and reports

(g) For moose and sheep, a person may not hunt moose or sheep, except in a permit hunt or in the Gates of the Arctic National Park, unless the person has in possession a harvest ticket for the species and has obtained a harvest report (issued with the harvest ticket); however, a person who is hunting Dall sheep in the Gates of the Arctic National Park must register with the department.

The board has made positive C&T findings for sheep as follows: sheep in Units 23 and 26A, that portion west of the Etivluk River (DeLong Mountains), ANS of 0–9; sheep in Unit 23, Baird Mountains, ANS of 18–47; sheep in Units 23 and 26A, that portion east of the Etivluk River (Schwatka Mountains), ANS of 2–4; and sheep in Units 23, 24, 25A, and 26 (Brooks Range), ANS of 75–125.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? All sheep hunters participating in hunts would need to obtain harvest tickets, even in Gates of the Arctic National Park. Successful hunters would be required to validate the month and date of kill of each animal harvested by notching a harvest ticket and submit hunt reports to the department within 15 days after taking the legal bag limit or within 15 days after the close of the season if unsuccessful or did not hunt. Failure to possess a harvest ticket while hunting would be a wildlife violation.

BACKGROUND: This proposal was deferred from the 2016 Statewide meeting. It was previously numbered Proposal 86.

The current registration system for resident sheep hunters was developed primarily to accommodate rural constituents hunting in the GAAR.

Options to register with the department for sheep hunting were suggested when vendor support was low and familiarity or availability of sheep harvest tickets was minimal. We are uncertain of compliance with licensing requirements and have had few hunters use this method to comply with hunting regulations.

Compliance with more rigorous monitoring systems will require education, local

understanding of procedures, vendor support, and increased presence of department staff involved with sheep management.

Additional information available since the March 2016 Statewide meeting follows. Sheep populations in Unit 23 and Unit 26A survey areas declined 78% between 2011 and 2015, and resulted in low annual harvest and state and federal sheep season closures. The federal season in the Noatak National Park and Preserve was closed in 2014 and state managed hunts in Unit 23 were closed in 2015. Between 2011 and 2014, reported harvest indicates an average annual harvest of 12 sheep per year in Unit 23 (combined state and federal harvest data; however, 2012 federal harvest data unavailable). An average of 32 sheep per year were reported in Unit 26A during the same time period. Federal harvest makes up 92% of total reported sheep harvest in Unit 23 and Unit 26A.

Additionally, the federal hunt remains open in the GAAR in portions of Units 23 (Schwatka Mountains) and 26A (East of Howard Pass). Sheep harvest in Unit 26A also remains open in the portion of Unit 26A east of and including the Etivluk River drainage, excluding the GAAR. Anaktuvuk Pass residents are able to participate in a community harvest quota of 60 sheep (no more than 10 may be ewes) on GAAR land within Units 26A and 26B.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal to collect improved harvest information. Sheep declines in the area warrant improved harvest reporting to manage sheep populations however it is unclear whether a shift to a harvest ticket will accomplish this goal.

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

PROPOSAL 12 – 5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep, and 92.008. Harvest guideline levels. Establish a 10% nonresident sheep permit allocation and change all nonresident sheep hunts to draw permits for Region V (Arctic/Western Region) hunts.

PROPOSED BY: Resident Hunters of Alaska

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would establish a 10% nonresident sheep permit allocation and change all nonresident hunts to drawing permit hunts in Region V.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The current sheep hunting regulations can be found in 5 AAC 85.055 and in the *2016-2017 Alaska Hunting Regulations*. The board recently allocated sheep hunting opportunity on a statewide basis by limiting nonresident bag limits to 1 sheep every 4 years. Resident bag limits remain 1 sheep every year.

- Unit 23

- Residents and nonresidents: no open season.
- Unit 26A [west of Etivluk River drainage (DeLong Mountains)]
 - Residents and nonresidents: no open season
- Unit 26A [east of and including the Etivluk River drainage, excluding Gates of the Arctic National Park]
 - Residents and nonresidents: August 1–5, one full-curl ram (youth hunt only)
 - Residents and nonresidents: August 10–September 20, one full-curl ram.
 - Residents only: August 1–April 30, 3 sheep by permit
- Unit 26A (private lands within Gates of the Arctic National Park)
 - Residents only: August 1–April 30, 3 sheep.
- Unit 26A (remainder)
 - Residents and nonresidents: August 1–5, one full-curl ram (youth hunt only)
 - Residents and nonresidents: August 10–September 20, one full-curl ram.

The board has made positive C&T findings for sheep as follows: sheep in Units 23 and 26A, that portion west of the Etivluk River (DeLong Mountains), ANS of 0–9; sheep in Unit 23, Baird Mountains, ANS of 18–47; sheep in Units 23 and 26A, that portion east of the Etivluk River (Schwatka Mountains), ANS of 2–4; and sheep in Units 23, 24, 25A, and 26 (Brooks Range), ANS of 75–125.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If this proposal is adopted, the department would limit nonresident sheep hunting opportunity to 10% of the total number of hunters who participated during the previous 3 years. The board would need to create new nonresident sheep draw hunts and/or limited registration hunts to regulate nonresident hunting opportunity.

BACKGROUND: Board policy (2007-173-BOG) indicates that allocations for specific hunts will be decided individually, based upon historical patterns of nonresident and resident use over the past 10 years. The board has allocated hunting opportunity previously between resident and nonresident hunters by modifying season dates or by allocating permits (keeping in mind the preference for subsistence uses). Similar requests for board changes in allocation of sheep hunting opportunity have been addressed previously by the board at meetings for Regions II, III, IV and V.

Excluding federal hunts in Unit 23 and Unit 26A, nonresident sheep hunters accounted for an average of 15% of the sheep hunters in Region V between RY2011 and RY2015 with an average of 4 nonresidents participating annually.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocation of sheep hunting opportunity between resident and nonresident hunters.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal would not result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 13 – 5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep, and 92.008 Harvest guideline levels. Establish a 25% nonresident sheep permit allocation and change all nonresident sheep hunts to draw permits for Region V (Arctic/Western Region) hunts.

PROPOSED BY: Luke Graham

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would establish a 25% nonresident sheep permit allocation and change all nonresident hunts to drawing permit hunts in Region V.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The current sheep hunting regulations can be found in 5 AAC 85.055 and in the *2016-2017 Alaska Hunting Regulations*. The board recently allocated sheep hunting opportunity on a statewide basis by limiting nonresident bag limits to 1 sheep every 4 years. Resident bag limits remain 1 sheep every year.

- Unit 23
 - Residents and nonresidents: no open season.
- Unit 26A [west of Etivluk River drainage (DeLong Mountains)]
 - Residents and nonresidents: no open season
- Unit 26A [east of and including the Etivluk River drainage, excluding Gates of the Arctic National Park]
 - Residents and nonresidents: August 1–5, one full-curl ram (youth hunt only)
 - Residents and nonresidents: August 10–September 20, one full-curl ram.
 - Residents only: August 1–April 30, 3 sheep by permit
- Unit 26A (private lands within Gates of the Arctic National Park)
 - Residents only: August 1–April 30, 3 sheep.
- Unit 26A (remainder)
 - Residents and nonresidents: August 1–5, one full-curl ram (youth hunt only)
 - Residents and nonresidents: August 10–September 20, one full-curl ram.

The board has made positive C&T findings for sheep as follows: sheep in Units 23 and 26A, that portion west of the Etivluk River (DeLong Mountains), ANS of 0–9; sheep in Unit 23, Baird Mountains, ANS of 18–47; sheep in Units 23 and 26A, that portion east of the Etivluk River (Schwotka Mountains), ANS of 2–4; and sheep in Units 23, 24, 25A, and 26 (Brooks Range), ANS of 75–125.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If this proposal is adopted, the department would limit nonresident sheep harvest to 25% of the total harvest that occurred during the previous 5 years. The board would need to create new nonresident sheep draw hunts and/or limited registration hunts to regulate nonresident sheep harvest. The department would issue a sufficient number of permits to allow nonresident hunters to harvest no more than 25% of the historical sheep harvest based on nonresident success rates.

BACKGROUND: Board policy (2007-173-BOG) indicates that allocations for specific hunts will be decided individually, based upon historical patterns of nonresident and resident use over the past 10 years. The board has allocated hunting opportunity previously between resident and nonresident hunters by modifying season dates or by allocating permits (keeping in mind the preference for subsistence uses). Similar requests for board changes in allocation of sheep hunting opportunity have been addressed previously by the board at meetings covering Regions II, III, IV and V.

Excluding federal hunts in Unit 23 and Unit 26A, nonresident sheep hunters accounted for an average of 15% of the sheep hunters in Region V between RY2011 and RY2015 with an average of 4 nonresidents participating annually.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocation of sheep hunting opportunity between resident and nonresident hunters.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal would not result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 14 – 5 AAC 92.008. Harvest guideline levels. Establish a 12% nonresident sheep permit allocation of the total harvest using a three-year average.

PROPOSED BY: Jacques Etcheverry

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would establish a 12% nonresident sheep permit allocation using a three- year average.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The current sheep hunting regulations can be found in 5 AAC 85.055 and in the *2016-2017 Alaska Hunting Regulations*. The board recently allocated sheep hunting opportunity on a statewide basis by limiting nonresident bag limits to 1 sheep every 4 years. Resident bag limits remain 1 sheep every year.

- Unit 23
 - Residents and nonresidents: no open season.

- Unit 26A [west of Etivluk River drainage (DeLong Mountains)]
 - Residents and nonresidents: no open season

- Unit 26A [east of and including the Etivluk River drainage, excluding Gates of the Arctic National Park]
 - Residents and nonresidents: August 1–5, one full-curl ram (youth hunt only)
 - Residents and nonresidents: August 10–September 20, one full-curl ram.
 - Residents only: August 1–April 30, 3 sheep by permit
- Unit 26A (private lands within Gates of the Arctic National Park)
 - Residents only: August 1–April 30, 3 sheep.
- Unit 26A (remainder)
 - Residents and nonresidents: August 1–5, one full-curl ram (youth hunt only)
 - Residents and nonresidents: August 10–September 20, one full-curl ram.

The board has made positive C&T findings for sheep as follows: sheep in Units 23 and 26A, that portion west of the Etivluk River (DeLong Mountains), ANS of 0–9; sheep in Unit 23, Baird Mountains, ANS of 18–47; sheep in Units 23 and 26A, that portion east of the Etivluk River (Schwatka Mountains), ANS of 2–4; and sheep in Units 23, 24, 25A, and 26 (Brooks Range), ANS of 75–125.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If this proposal is adopted, the department would limit nonresident sheep harvest to 12% of the total harvest that occurred during the previous 3 years. The board would need to create new nonresident sheep draw hunts and/or limited registration hunts to regulate nonresident sheep harvest. The department would issue a sufficient number of permits to allow nonresident hunters to harvest no more than 12% of the historical sheep harvest based on nonresident success rates.

BACKGROUND: Board policy (2007-173-BOG) indicates that allocations for specific hunts will be decided individually, based upon historical patterns of nonresident and resident use over the past 10 years. The board has allocated hunting opportunity previously between resident and nonresident hunters by modifying season dates or by allocating permits (keeping in mind the preference for subsistence uses). Similar requests for board changes in allocation of sheep hunting opportunity have been addressed previously by the board at meetings covering Regions II, III, IV and V.

Excluding federal hunts in Unit 23 and Unit 26A, nonresident sheep hunters accounted for an average of 15% of the sheep hunters in Region V between RY2011 and RY2015 with an average of 4 nonresidents participating annually.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocation of sheep hunting opportunity between resident and nonresident hunters.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal would not result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 15 – 5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep, and 92.050. Required permit hunt conditions and procedures. Restrict the harvest of Dall sheep in the Arctic/Western Region to one every five years.

PROPOSED BY: Jacques Etcheverry

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would restrict the harvest of Dall Sheep to one every five years if a hunter is determined to have harvested a sub-legal ram.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The current sheep hunting regulations can be found in 5 AAC 85.055 and in the *2016-2017 Alaska Hunting Regulations*.

- Unit 23
 - Residents and nonresidents: no open season.
- Unit 26A [west of Etivluk River drainage (DeLong Mountains)]
 - Residents and nonresidents: no open season
- Unit 26A [east of and including the Etivluk River drainage, excluding Gates of the Arctic National Park]
 - Residents and nonresidents: August 1–5, one full-curl ram (youth hunt only)
 - Residents and nonresidents: August 10–September 20, one full-curl ram.
 - Residents only: August 1–April 30, 3 sheep by permit
- Unit 26A (private lands within Gates of the Arctic National Park)
 - Residents only: August 1–April 30, 3 sheep.
- Unit 26A (remainder)
 - Residents and nonresidents: August 1–5, one full-curl ram (youth hunt only)
 - Residents and nonresidents: August 10–September 20, one full-curl ram.

The board has made positive C&T findings for sheep as follows: sheep in Units 23 and 26A, that portion west of the Etivluk River (DeLong Mountains), ANS of 0–9; sheep in Unit 23, Baird Mountains, ANS of 18–47; sheep in Units 23 and 26A, that portion east of the Etivluk River (Schwatka Mountains), ANS of 2–4; and sheep in Units 23, 24, 25A, and 26 (Brooks Range), ANS of 75–125.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal would prevent hunters who harvest a sublegal ram from hunting in Units 23 and 26A for five years.

BACKGROUND: Sheep hunting seasons were closed in Unit 23 in 2014 due to a unit-wide population decline and a reduction in the harvestable surplus. Prior to the hunting season

closure, the board adopted “any sheep” bag limits, which would be exempt from the changes made by this proposal.

Unit 26A has full-curl ram bag limits; however, the department is not aware of sublegal sheep harvest in Unit 26A. Since 2005, hunter effort information collected by the department indicates that only 10% of Unit 26A sheep hunters returned to the area to hunt 1 additional time. One hunter returned more than once and hunted a total of 4 times in Unit 26A.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal because it allocates hunting opportunity and does not address a biological concern that can be associated with illegal sheep harvest in Unit 26A. The low return rate of hunters also suggests that this proposal would not have an effect on the sheep population in this area.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal would not result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 16 – 5 AAC 92.057. Special provisions for Dall sheep and mountain goat drawing permit hunts; 92.061. Special provisions for brown bear drawing permit hunts; 92.069. Special provisions for moose drawing permit hunts; and 85.025. Hunting seasons and bag limits for caribou. Establish a 90/10 percent permit allocation for resident and nonresident drawing permits for sheep, moose, caribou, and brown bears.

PROPOSED BY: Resident Hunters of Alaska

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would establish up to 10% of available draw permits be allocated to nonresident hunters for sheep, moose, caribou, and brown bears for species that utilize drawing hunts for both residents and nonresidents.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There are no drawing permit hunts that offer resident and nonresident hunting opportunity for the same species in Region V.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If this proposal is adopted, the department would attempt to limit nonresident sheep, moose, caribou, and brown bear hunters to up to 10% of the available hunting opportunity in hunts that require residents and nonresidents to obtain a drawing permit.

BACKGROUND: Region V does not have any drawing hunts that meet the description of type of hunt identified in this proposal.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocation of hunting opportunity between resident and nonresident hunters.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal would not result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 17 – 5 AAC 92.990(a)(26). Definitions. Modify the definition of edible meat for all game birds.

PROPOSED BY: Central Kuskokwim Fish and Game Advisory Committee

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would modify the definition of edible meat for all game birds as follows:

"edible meat" means, in the case of a big game animal, except a bear, the meat of the ribs, neck, brisket, front quarters, hindquarters, and the meat along the backbone between the front and hindquarters; in the case of a bear, the meat of the front quarters and hindquarters and meat along the backbone (backstrap); **for all game birds, the meat from the breast, back, thighs, legs;** [IN THE CASE OF SMALL GAME BIRDS, EXCEPT FOR CRANES, GEESE AND SWAN, THE MEAT OF THE BREAST; IN THE CASE OF CRANES, GEESE, AND SWAN, THE MEAT OF THE BREAST AND MEAT OF THE FEMUR AND TIBIA-FIBULA (LEGS AND THIGHS);] however, "edible meat" of big game or small game birds 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...

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? 5 AAC 92.990(a)(26) "edible meat" means, ... in the case of small game birds, except for cranes, geese, and swan, the meat of the breast; in the case of cranes, geese, and swan, the meat of the breast and meat of the femur and tibia-fibula (legs and thighs); ...

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If adopted, this proposal would require hunters to salvage the meat of the breast, back, thighs, and legs of all harvested game birds.

BACKGROUND: This proposal is scheduled for the Arctic/Western Region meeting as Proposal 17 and the Interior/Northeast Arctic Region meeting as Proposal 47.

Effective July 1, 2014, the board created a different definition of edible meat for cranes, geese, and swans in order to require more meat to be salvaged from these large migratory waterfowl.

Under the current definition of edible meat the majority of meat is required to be salvaged, and many hunters voluntarily salvage the meat of the legs of smaller game birds.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal as there are no biological concerns.

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

PROPOSAL 18 – 5AAC 92.015. Brown bear tag fee exemptions. Reauthorize the brown bear tag fee exemption for Units 18, 22, 23, and 26A.

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 bears in Units 18, 22, 23 and 26A.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Brown bear tag fees are not required for residents in drawing, registration, or subsistence permit hunts in Units 18, 22, 23, and 26A.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Resident hunters would not be required to purchase a resident locking tag for drawing or registration permit brown bear hunts in Units 18, 22, 23, 26A. Similarly, hunters participating in subsistence registration permit hunts would not be required to purchase a brown bear locking tag to harvest a bear, although possession of the subsistence registration permit would still be required.

BACKGROUND: The Board of Game must reauthorize brown bear tag fee exemptions annually or the fee automatically becomes reinstated. Brown bear drawing and registration permit hunts have had fees exempted in Unit 18 for 5 years, Unit 22 for 15 years, Unit 23 for 10 years, and Unit 26A for 5 years. Exemptions have been implemented to allow: 1) incremental increases in harvest, 2) additional opportunity for residents, and 3) harvest for a wide range of uses. Increased harvest is allowable because portions of these units have high bear populations. These 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 brown bear registration permit hunts, reauthorizations are needed for Units 18, 22, 23, and 26A where 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 registration permit 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 registration permit hunts. In all units, subsistence brown bear registration permit harvest rates are low and well within sustained yield limits and exempting the resident tag fee has not caused an increase in subsistence harvest.

Table 131-1: Customary and traditional uses of brown bear populations, Units 18, 22, 23 and 26A

Game Management Unit	Findin g	Amount reasonably necessary
Unit 18	Positive	20–30
Units 21 and 22	Positive	20–25
Units 23, 24, and 26	Positive	25–35

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

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

PROPOSAL 19 – 5 AAC 92.130. Restrictions to bag limit. Remove the bag limit restriction for resident relatives accompanying nonresident second degree of kindred.

PROPOSED BY: Kyle Jones

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would remove the link between resident and nonresident-relative bag limits in which the harvest of brown/grizzly bears, mountain goats, and sheep by a nonresident relative counts against the bag limit of the accompanying resident hunter.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Beginning July 1, 2018, a brown bear, grizzly bear, mountain goat, or sheep taken by a nonresident hunter personally accompanied by a resident relative under AS 16.05.407(a)(2) will count as the bag limit of both the nonresident and the resident relative who accompanies the nonresident.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If adopted, resident hunters would be able to hunt with nonresident relatives without having the nonresident harvest count against their resident bag limit.

BACKGROUND: This proposal is scheduled for the Arctic/Western Region meeting as Proposal 19 and the Interior/Northeast Arctic Region meeting as Proposal 49.

The board has adopted regulations to allocate hunting opportunity between resident and nonresident hunters and, in some cases, has made additional allocations for guided nonresident hunters and nonresidents hunting with resident relatives. When allocating hunting opportunity, the board has followed the guidelines in the board’s policy (2007-173-BOG).

The board adopted this regulation during the March 2016 meeting. In Region V, this regulation would affect grizzly bear hunters in Units 18, 22, 23, and 26A, and sheep hunters in Unit 26A. Since the regulation has not been implemented yet, we have not had the opportunity to evaluate the regulatory change for Region V affected hunts.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocation of hunting opportunity between resident and nonresident hunters; however, because the board adopted this regulation during the 2016 Statewide Board of Game meeting, the department recommends that the board consider this topic on a statewide basis.

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

PROPOSAL 20 – 5 AAC 92.080. Unlawful methods of taking game; exceptions; and 92.085. Unlawful methods of taking big game; exceptions. Allow the use of crossbows in restricted weapons hunts.

PROPOSED BY: Howard Delo

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would allow the use of crossbows in restricted weapons hunts.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The Arctic/Western Region has one Tier II restricted weapons hunt area in Unit 22C near the community of Nome.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If adopted, successful hunters would be able to hunt with a crossbow in the Unit 22C Tier II restricted weapons hunt area.

BACKGROUND: The Board of Game deferred this proposal from the 2016 Statewide meeting. It was previously numbered Proposal 14. This proposal is scheduled for the Arctic/Western Region meeting as Proposal 20 and the Interior/Northeast Arctic Region meeting as Proposal 48.

At the direction of the board, the department uses discretionary authority found in 92.052(10) to restrict the method of harvest to shotgun, archery, and muzzleloader only, and all participants must have weapons-specific certification. The department implemented the weapons restriction due to public safety concerns near homes and the community of Nome related to Tier II muskox hunting in the local area.

The Tier II hunt near Nome began in 2011, and the department has not received complaints related to the limited use of shotguns, archery equipment, or muzzleloaders in this hunt. If a Tier II permit holder with a disability contacted us with a desire to use a crossbow, we would have him or her complete an application for a methods and means exemption permit, which would

allow him or her to participate in the hunt with a crossbow. The department’s hunter education section commonly allows people with these exemption permits to obtain their certification with a crossbow in the regular IBEP program, and the board recently passed a requirement for crossbow certification.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal and has never received a request from a hunter to participate in the hunt with a crossbow.

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

PROPOSAL 21– 5 AAC 85.045. Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose. Open a winter hunting season for moose in Unit 18 Goodnews hunt area.

PROPOSED BY: Native Village of Goodnews Bay

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal seeks to add a resident only 21-day, winter hunt for antlered bulls to the Goodnews area with a season that is “to be announced” during the month of January and a quota of 10 bull moose.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The current resident moose hunting season in Unit 18, that portion south of and including the Goodnews River drainage, is September 1–September 30 with a bag limit of 1 antlered bull by registration permit only. There is no open moose season for nonresidents in this area.

There is a positive C&T finding for moose in Unit 18, and an ANS of 200–400.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal would provide additional opportunity for residents to harvest moose in the Goodnews River drainage by allowing a 21-day, winter season using a registration permit hunt structure and a season that is “to be announced” during the month of January.

BACKGROUND: Hunting was closed in this portion of Unit 18 from RY2004–RY2007. A minimum threshold of 100 moose was established, and the Board of Game authorized a registration moose hunt open to residents only in RY2007 when the moose population was approximately 130 moose. The harvest quota was 10 antlered bulls from RY2008–RY2010 and increased to 20 antlered bulls from RY2011–RY2015 with a harvest ranging from 9–18 bulls during this time period. Most of the Goodnews Bay hunt area is local Native corporation land, or Federal lands associated with the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge.

A spring moose trend count survey completed in 2012 found 203 moose in the Goodnews survey area. The current harvest quota of 20 antlered bulls is approximately an 8–10% harvest rate.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal, but recommends that the board allow the department to retain its discretion on when to offer the winter hunt until additional population information can be collected to ensure harvest patterns are sustainable from the area. If this proposal is adopted, the department would also like to retain its discretion to set fall and winter quotas based on current population information.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal would not result in additional costs for the department.

PROPOSAL 22– 5 AAC 85.045 Hunting season and bag limits for moose. Open a winter nonresident hunting season for moose in Unit 18 remainder as follows:

Establish a nonresident season in Unit 18 remainder area from December 1–March 15.

PROPOSED BY: Jon LaValle

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would create additional nonresident hunting opportunity by creating a winter nonresident moose season from December 1–March 15 in Unit 18 remainder. The proponent did not recommend a bag limit.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The current nonresident moose season in the remainder of Unit 18 is September 1–September 30 with a bag limit of 1 antlered bull. The resident season is August 1–March 15 with a total bag limit of 2 moose. From August 1–September 30, resident hunters are only allowed to harvest 1 antlered bull and are prohibited from taking a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf. Resident hunters may take 2 antlerless moose from October 1–November 30 and/or 2 moose from December 1–March 15.

There is a positive C&T finding for moose in Unit 18, and an ANS of 200–400.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal would create a new winter nonresident moose season with December 1–March 15 season dates.

BACKGROUND: The Yukon River moose population includes approximately 12,000 moose in several combined survey areas. Population surveys indicate that calf:cow ratios range between 37– 69 calves:100 cows, and twinning rates range from 20–40%. Anecdotal evidence suggests calf survival rates remain high.

Most of Unit 18 is either private lands or part of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge; guides and transporters are required to secure land use agreements with local landowners and/or land managers. Nonresident moose harvest increased from 19 in RY2011 to 109 in RY2015. Resident harvest remained relatively stable during the same time period with harvest reports

indicating that 498 moose were taken during RY2011 and 548 moose were taken during RY2015. The average annual harvest was 511 moose per year.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal because it is allocative. If the board adopts this proposal, the department recommends the board establish a bag limit of “one antlerless moose” for nonresidents. This bag limit satisfies the proponent’s desire to provide an opportunity for winter moose meat without the unintended consequences of creating a unique winter bull hunt for nonresidents. Large numbers of bulls retain their antlers during December and January in Unit 18, which could make the hunt desirable for some nonresident hunters. The “antlerless moose bag limit” is not expected to result in a harvest that would create a biological concern.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal would not result in additional costs for the department.

PROPOSAL 23 5 AAC 85.045 Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose. Reauthorize the antlerless moose seasons in the Remainder of Unit 18.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal reauthorizes the antlerless moose season in the remainder of Unit 18.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Antlerless hunting during fall and winter seasons is allowed for resident hunters in the “Remainder of Unit 18”. There are three components to antlerless seasons:

- 1) during August 1–September 30 the bag limit is 2 moose; however, only one antlered bull may be taken and taking calves or cows accompanied by calves is prohibited;
- 2) during October 1–November 30 the bag limit is 2 antlerless moose with no additional restrictions; and
- 3) during December 1–March 15 the bag limit is 2 moose with no additional restrictions.

There is a positive C&T finding for moose in Unit 18, and an ANS of 200–400.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The antlerless hunts in the remainder of Unit 18 would be reauthorized for RY2016. Hunters would have the same seasons and bag limits as RY2015 (see Current Regulations above).

BACKGROUND: Antlerless moose seasons must be reauthorized annually. The hunt area in the remainder of Unit 18 supports a moose population that has increased to an all-time high

level, reaching an estimated minimum population of 12,000 moose. In all areas surveyed, moose populations have twinning rates at or above 40%. Reported harvest during the past three years has averaged 395 bulls and 160 cows.

Harvests increased approximately 16% in RY2015 (n=669) compared to the previous 3-year average harvest (n=576). In RY2015, the harvest ticket reports from the remainder of Unit 18 included 60 antlerless moose (cows) taken in the fall hunt, along with the harvest of 96 antlerless moose (cows) taken in a winter hunt. The combined harvest for the current the remainder of Unit 18 represented in this reauthorization is well within sustained yield, and the population trajectory has not been affected by antlerless harvests.

The Remainder of Unit 18 has under-utilized moose habitat and is expected to support a growing moose population. Continuing antlerless moose harvest opportunity will benefit hunters and may also help slow the growth rate of the population.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal to maintain antlerless hunts in areas where moose populations are increasing.

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

PROPOSAL 24– 5 AAC 92.044. Permit for hunting bear with the use of bait or scent lures. Allow the harvest of brown bear at bear bait stations in Unit 18.

PROPOSED BY: Jaimie Kassman

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal allows brown bears to be taken over bait in Unit 18.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

- Hunters can take 1 brown bear every regulatory year in Unit 18 September 1–May31.
- Resident locking tags are not required to hunt brown bears in Unit 18.

There is a positive C&T for brown bears in Unit 18, and an ANS of 20–30. The board has not made a C&T determination on black bear populations in Unit 18.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal would allow brown bear baiting opportunity in Unit 18, with the exception of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service managed lands (approximately 65% of Unit 18) where brown bear baiting is prohibited by federal regulation.

BACKGROUND: Brown bear harvest in Unit 18 has been relatively stable since the early 2000s. Between RY2006 and RY2015 harvest ranged from 5 to 39 bears with an average annual harvest of 29 (68% male) bears (Table 24-1). Bear baiting activity in Unit 18 has increased over the past 10 years, with 0–9 registered bait stations during the period of 2006–2015. Since 2006, hunters harvested 78% of the total Unit 18 brown bear harvest during the fall season. Based on the trends in harvest for other areas where brown bear baiting is authorized, an increase in brown bear harvest may occur after brown bear baiting is authorized, but harvest is expected to stabilize at pre-baiting levels after the initial increase.

The bear population in Unit 18 has not been surveyed, but observations by department staff and the public indicate that the population is distributed throughout the unit and abundant on major tributaries. Harvest density is generally low and not believed to be a factor influencing bear numbers.

Table 24-1. Chronology of brown bear harvest in Unit 18 and the number of registered bear baiting stations, regulatory years 2006 through 2015.

Regulatory Year				Number of Registered Bear Baiting Stations
	Fall	Spring	Total	
2006	18	4	22	0
2007	26	7	33	0
2008	24	7	31	4
2009	20	6	26	3
2010	23	12	35	2
2011	31	8	39	4
2012	25	7	32	9
2013	16	6	22	7
2014	23	4	27	7
2015	20	3	23	9
<i>Average</i>	<i>22.6</i>	<i>6.4</i>	<i>28.9</i>	<i>4.5</i>

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal because it has not identified a biological concern for the brown bear population in Unit 18, and adoption of this proposal is not expected to increase brown bear harvest significantly.

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

PROPOSAL 25 – 5 AAC 85.025. Hunting seasons and bag limits for caribou. Open a nonresident draw hunt for caribou in Units 18 and 19.

PROPOSED BY: Aaron Bloomquist

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would open a nonresident draw hunt for Mulchatna caribou in Units 18, 19A, and 19B. The bag limit would be one bull caribou, and the open season would be September 1–30. The author recommends a maximum of 50 permits could be issued, but suggests that the department only issue 20 permits initially.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

- Registration permits RC501, RC503, and RC504 are used to manage caribou hunting for Mulchatna herd caribou (MCH) which includes Units 18 and 19A, 19B, 9A, 9B, a portion of 9C, and Unit 17.
 - Season dates for the RC503 hunt area that includes Units 18, 19A, 19B, 9A and the portion of 9C north of the Alagnak River drainage are August 1–March 15, with a bag limit of 2 caribou.
 - Season dates for the RC503 hunt area that includes Unit 9B and all but a small portion of Unit 17 are August 1–March 31, with a bag limit of 2 caribou.
 - Season dates for the RC504 hunt area that includes a portion of Unit 9C north of the north bank of the Naknek River and south of the Alagnak River drainage “may be announced” depending on caribou abundance in this area. The bag limit is 1 caribou.
 - Season dates for the RC501 hunt area including a small portion of Unit 17A and a small portion of 17C “may be announced” depending on the abundance of caribou in this area. The bag limit is 2 caribou.
- There is currently no nonresident season in regulation for the Mulchatna caribou herd.
- The Mulchatna caribou population has a positive finding for intensive management, with a population objective of 30,000–80,000 and an annual harvest objective of 2,400–8,000. There is an intensive management plan in regulation for this herd; however, the current plan does not include Unit 18.
- There is a positive C&T finding for the Mulchatna caribou herd in Units 9A, 9B, 17, 18, 19A south of the Kuskokwim River, and 19B, and an ANS of 2,100–2,400 caribou in all units combined.
- There are positive C&T findings for other caribou herds (Big River, Rainy Pass, Kilbuck, Andreafsky, Tonzona, Beaver Mountains, Sunshine Mountains) in various units and subunits affected by this proposal (16B, 18, 19), with various ANSs for each herd.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If this proposal were adopted a portion of the area managed for the MCH would be included in the nonresident draw hunt.

BACKGROUND: This proposal is scheduled for the Arctic/Western Region meeting as Proposal 25 and the Interior/Northeast Arctic Region meeting as Proposal 83.

The MCH has gone through a dramatic change in abundance over the past 20 years with an estimated population of 200,000 animals in 1996 to approximately 27,000 today. Population models indicate that the harvestable surplus lies in the range of 800–1200 caribou with a likely point estimate near 1,000 caribou.

With that change in abundance, management of this herd has changed as well. Season dates during the high level of abundance extended to April 15, but were shortened to March 15 in 2006 as this herd was declining to fewer than 50,000 animals. During the peak years, the bag limits also reflected a more liberal management strategy with up to 5 caribou allowed annually for residents, and a bag limit of 2 caribou for nonresidents. As the herd declined during the mid-2000s, bag limits were lowered, season length shortened, and the nonresident season was closed by board action following the 2008 hunting season.

The Mulchatna caribou population has a positive finding for intensive management, with a population objective of 30,000–80,000 and an annual harvest objective of 2,400–8,000. Due to low population and harvest levels below these objectives, an intensive management plan was initially authorized by the board under 5 AAC 92.111 *Mulchatna Caribou Herd Predation Management Area* in March 2011 for Units 9B, 17B, and 17C; this plan was modified in March 2012 to include Units 19A and 19B. This plan is implemented as a wolf predation control area in those portions of Units 17B and 17C that encompass the southern calving grounds of the Mulchatna herd and has been active each year. The goal of this program is to increase caribou calf survival and thereby recruitment by removing wolves which have been shown to be an important predator on neonate caribou calves in this area. Our most recent abundance estimate from June 2016 was just over 27,000 caribou.

The reported harvest of Mulchatna caribou during 2010–2015 in all units combined ranged from 101–494 caribou, averaging of 281 caribou per year. Harvests during this time period have come from all units within the MCH range; in more recent years, the majority of harvest has been taken in Unit 18. Both population size and harvest are below the objectives defined in 5 AAC 92.108, therefore the predation control program will remain active for the 2016 regulatory year.

In spring 2013 the board adopted a department proposal that required the use of a registration permit (RC503) to hunt Mulchatna caribou throughout this herd's range; this permit replaced the general season harvest ticket. The purpose of this change was to provide the department with better information for managing this herd to help with addressing management issues such as this proposal. Permit conditions require a 5-day reporting period after harvesting a caribou, and the permit is also subject to the failure to report (FTR) process that allows the department to impose penalties to those parties failing to report their effort and harvest. This increases the harvest reporting rate, which is important in assessing harvest and effort over time. However, harvest reporting continues to significantly underestimate harvests of Mulchatna caribou in Unit 18. For example, Bethel residents harvested an estimated total of 446 caribou in 2011, whereas the average reported harvest during the period 1998–2011 was 160 caribou.

The ANS for the MCH (2,100–2,400 caribou) was adopted by the board in 1992; however subsistence use in the Unit 18 portion of the range was not included in the ANS because the herd did not migrate into that unit when the ANS was developed. At the March 2016 Statewide

meeting the board established a positive customary and traditional finding for MCH in Unit 18 but did not alter the ANS.

The positive C&T finding and ANS for the Kilbuck and Andrafsky caribou herds in Unit 18, which no longer exist, is 350–500 caribou.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocation of Mulchatna caribou in Units 18 and 19 but recommends this proposal be **DEFERRED** to the next regularly scheduled Central/Southwest Region Board meeting in spring 2018. Under AS 16.05.258(b), nonsubsistence uses of a game population with C&T uses are not permitted if the harvestable surplus is below the ANS.

The MCH spans multiple game management units and includes multiple ADF&G regions, but is managed across its range as a single caribou herd with the primary management responsibility resting with Region IV and the Dillingham office. The proponent indicates he will be submitting a proposal similar to this proposal at the Central/Southwest Region meeting in spring 2018 to allow for a nonresident draw permit hunt for caribou in Units 17 and 9. Our recommendation to defer this proposal to the spring 2018 meeting would allow us to address this nonresident draw permit concept for the entire range of the MCH, which adheres to the board and the department’s intentions of having a uniform management approach for this herd. Additional advantages of this deferment would be that the department could gather another year of harvest information under the relatively new RC503 registration permit, and we could acquire another abundance estimate from our annual photo census in June of 2017. Both of these data are important in calculating harvestable surplus which is an important component when addressing ANS which will likely be part of this discussion.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal would not result in significant administrative costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 26 –5 AAC 85.045. Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose. Lengthen the hunting season for moose in Unit 22A.

PROPOSED BY: Southern Norton Sound Fish and Game Advisory Committee

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? The proposal adds 6 days to the fall moose season in central Unit 22A by extending the season closure date from September 14 to September 20.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The resident moose hunting season in Unit 22A Unalakleet River Drainage (central portion of Unit 22A) is September 1–September 14 and a winter season that is “to be announced” from December 1–December 31. The bag limit for both seasons is one antlered bull. The hunt is administered with a registration permit and utilizes an annual harvest quota. There is no nonresident season in the area.

There's a positive C&T for moose in Unit 22 and an ANS of 250–300.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The proposal would lengthen the fall season six days, so that it ends September 20.

BACKGROUND: There was no moose hunting season in the central portion of Unit 22A from 2005–2007 because of a long trend of declining moose numbers and low moose densities (0.05 moose mi²) in the area. In November 2007 the board adopted a 14-day registration hunt, which was open only to residents. Moose season extensions were requested by members of the public or the Southern Norton Sound Fish and Game Advisory Committee annually from RY2011–RY2015. In each case the state season was extended by emergency order to close September 20.

The current harvestable surplus for Unit 22 is 295 moose. The harvestable surplus of moose throughout Unit 22 has ranged from 278–336 moose annually between 2005 and 2016 with an average of 314 moose. The population has increased and a stratified moose census completed in February 2012 estimated 545 observable moose ± 17% (452 to 639 moose at 90% C.I.). This is a 13% annual rate of increase between 2008 and 2012. Inadequate snow conditions prevented a population survey attempt in 2015.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** providing additional hunting opportunity in Unit 22A. The proposed season extension to September 20 for resident hunters is adequate to protect breeding bulls, which is important to allow for population growth. We do not recommend extending the season past September 20. Since the registration permit uses an annual harvest quota of 22 antlered bulls and reporting has been adequate we have no overharvest concerns with the season extension.

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

PROPOSAL 27 –5 AAC 85.045. Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose. Lengthen the nonresident hunting season for moose in Unit 22A.

PROPOSED BY: Lance Kronberger

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal adds 6 days to the nonresident fall moose season in Unit 22A north of and including the Tagoomenik and Shaktoolik river drainages by extending the season closure date from September 14 to September 20.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The current resident moose season in Unit 22A, that portion north of and including the Tagoomenik and Shaktoolik River drainages, is August 1–September 30 with a bag limit of 1 bull moose. The nonresident moose season is

September 1– September 14 with a bag limit of 1 bull with 50-inch antlers or antlers with 4 or more brow tines on one side.

There's a positive C&T for moose in Unit 22, and an ANS of 250–300.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The proposal would lengthen the nonresident fall season for bull moose by 6 days, closing on September 20.

BACKGROUND: Unit 22A, that portion north of and including the Tagoomenik and Shaktoolik river drainages, is located north of the community of Unalakleet, along the shores of Norton Sound. The hunt area is 1,844 mi², over 75% of which is federally managed lands closed to the harvest of moose except by residents of GMU 22A. The community of Shaktoolik is the only community within the hunt area and accounts for the majority of annual harvest (approximately 80%).

The current harvestable surplus for Unit 22 is 295 moose (range 285–325). The harvestable surplus of moose throughout Unit 22 has ranged from 278–336 moose annually between 2005 and 2016 with an average of 314 moose. Historically, the department has not conducted moose population surveys in the northern portion of Unit 22A. An abundance estimate completed in 2012 in the central portion of Unit 22A suggests the northern portion of the moose population in Unit 22A is between 358 and 498 moose (the two adjacent areas are similar in terrain and habitat). Moose densities in this portion of Unit 22A are likely between 0.2–0.3 moose/ mi².

The harvest of moose by residents and nonresidents is monitored using harvest tickets, but it is acknowledged that there is an annual unreported harvest that is not captured by the harvest reporting system. The average annual reported harvest between RY2006–RY2015 was 2 moose and 1 moose, respectively, for residents and nonresidents. A community harvest survey was completed in the community of Shaktoolik in 2010. Collectively, this information indicates approximately 10–15 moose were harvested annually from the northern portion of Unit 22A from RY2006–RY2015 (approximately a 2–4% harvest rate).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative nature of this proposal. The proposed season date of September 20, in conjunction with current antler restrictions, provides sufficient protection for breeding bulls. The department will continue to monitor harvest in the area, but recommends the implementation of a permit hunt structure for nonresidents in order to prevent the total harvest from exceeding 6% of the population estimate. The board may need to consider a more restrictive hunt structure if the harvestable surplus declines.

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

PROPOSAL 28 –5 AAC 85.045. Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose. Eliminate the nonresident moose hunt in Unit 22D Remainder and Unit 22E.

PROPOSED BY: Seward Peninsula Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would eliminate nonresident moose hunting in the remainder of Unit 22D and Unit 22E.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The resident moose hunting season in the remainder of Unit 22D is August 10–September 14 and October 1–January 31. The bag limit is one bull moose; however, only antlered bull moose can be harvested December 1–January 31. The resident hunt is administered with a harvest ticket. The nonresident moose hunting season is September 1–September 14 with a bag limit of 1 bull moose with at least 50-inch antlers or antlers with 4 or more brow tines on one side. The nonresident hunt is administered with a registration permit and has an annual harvest quota of 3 bulls; the hunt is closed by emergency order when the quota has been reached.

The resident moose hunting season in Unit 22E is August 1–March 15. The bag limit is one bull moose; however, only antlered bull moose can be harvested January 1–March 15. The resident hunt is administered with a harvest ticket. The nonresident moose hunting season is September 1–September 14 with a bag limit of 1 bull with at least 50-inch antlers or antlers with 4 or more brow tines on one side. The nonresident hunt is administered with a registration permit and has an annual harvest quota of 13 bulls; the hunt is closed by emergency order when the quota has been reached.

There’s a positive C&T for moose in Unit 22, and an ANS of 250–300.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The proposal would eliminate the nonresident moose season in the remainder of Unit 22D and Unit 22E.

BACKGROUND: The current harvestable surplus for Unit 22 is 295 moose. The harvestable surplus of moose throughout Unit 22 has ranged from 278–336 moose annually between 2005 and 2016 with an average of 314 moose.

Harvestable surplus in the remainder of Unit 22D is estimated to be 23–35 moose per year and efforts to reduce harvest may be necessary to maintain harvest at a sustainable level. Unit 22E harvestable surplus is estimated to be 42–56 moose per year, which is at the upper limit of harvest levels from the area.

A nonresident registration permit hunt with harvest a quota was established in 2004 for the remainder of Unit 22D and in 2008 for Unit 22E. In 2015 these registration permit hunts were

combined into a single permit hunt (RM855), but still retained separate harvest quotas for each area (3 and 13 bull moose, respectively).

Average annual reported Alaska resident harvest between 2006 and 2015 was 16 moose in the remainder of Unit 22D and 13 moose in Unit 22E. Community harvest assessment surveys conducted in Wales (2011), Shishmaref (2010), Brevig Mission (2012), and Teller (2012) found underreported harvest from the remainder of Unit 22D and Unit 22E hunt areas, and the harvest surveys estimated an average annual harvest of 7 moose in Wales, 28 in Shishmaref, 17 in Brevig Mission, and 5 in Teller. These combined harvest data indicate average annual combined resident and nonresident harvest is 35–45 moose annually in the remainder of Unit 22D and 50–60 moose in Unit 22E.

In terms of the moose population, Unit 22D and Unit 22E have been surveyed as one survey area since 2006 to account for moose movement between the two adjacent areas. Collectively, estimates of moose abundance from the combined survey area have remained relatively stable between 2006 and 2014, ranging from 2,035–2,350 observable moose.

The department completed a GSPE moose survey in Unit 22D and Unit 22E in 2014. The observable moose estimate for the remainder of Unit 22D was 491 moose (90% CI: 422–560) with 18% short yearlings, which is a 14% annual rate of decline between 2011 and 2014. A composition survey completed in 2011 found 35 bulls:100cows. The observable moose estimate for Unit 22E was 701 moose (90% CI: 603–799) with 13% short yearlings. The Unit 22E population exhibited a 2% annual rate of increase between 2006 and 2014. Composition surveys were completed for the first time in November 2014 and found 41 bulls:100 cows.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** with on the allocative nature of this proposal.

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

PROPOSAL 29 – 5 AAC 85.025. Hunting seasons and bag limits for caribou. Open a hunting season for caribou in Unit 22A by emergency order only.

PROPOSED BY: Theodore Katcheak

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would change the caribou season in the remainder of Unit 22A to a season that “may be announced”.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The current resident and nonresident hunting season in the remainder of Unit 22A is a season that is “to be announced” by emergency

order. The resident bag limit is 5 caribou per day, up to 20 caribou total, by registration permit, and the nonresident bag limit is 1 bull.

There's a positive C&T finding for the Western Arctic and Teshekpuk caribou herds, and an ANS of 8,000–12,000 combined.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? There would be no effect from this proposal because the caribou hunting season in the remainder of Unit 22A is already a season that may be announced by emergency order in regulation.

BACKGROUND: The board adopted a regulation during the March 2015 Southcentral meeting to create “may be announced” hunting seasons in this portion of Unit 22A so as to address concerns of reindeer herders in the area.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department recommends that the board **TAKE NO ACTION** on this proposal because a season that may be announced by emergency order is already in regulation for caribou hunting in the remainder of Unit 22A.

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

PROPOSAL 30 –5 AAC 85.020. Hunting seasons and bag limits for brown bear. Lengthen the hunting season for brown bear in Unit 22C.

PROPOSED BY: Kawerak, Inc., Nome Eskimo Community

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would add 30 days to the spring brown bear season in Unit 22C by moving the season's opening date from May 1 to April 1.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The resident brown bear hunting season in Unit 22C is August 1–October 31 and May 1–May 31. The bag limit is one bear per year.

The nonresident brown bear hunting season is August 1–October 31 and May 1–May 31 with a bag limit of one bear per year, by drawing permit only. The nonresident drawing hunt (DB685) area includes Unit 22C and Unit 22B with up to 27 permits issued annually.

There's a positive C&T for brown bears in Units 21 and 22, and an ANS of 20–25 in both units combined.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The proposal would lengthen the spring hunting season 30 days by opening the season on April 1 instead of May 1.

BACKGROUND: Unit 22C sealing records indicate that an average of 8 brown bears were harvested annually between RY1990 and RY1997 and 17 bears between RY1998 and RY2015. The board liberalized the bag limit from one bear every four regulatory years to one bear every regulatory year in RY2015. During RY2015 hunters harvested 30 bears from Unit 22C, which is the highest documented Unit 22C harvest. The management goal of sustaining a harvest that includes at least 50% boars on a 3-year average is being met. Unit 22C 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 RY2015 were boars.

Moose populations have recently declined in Unit 22C. A stratified population survey completed during March 2016 estimated 354 (90% CI: 306-403) observable moose, which is a 6% annual rate of decrease between 2013 and 2016 and also is below the Unit 22C moose population objective of 450–525 moose. The fall bull:cow ratios observed during trend count composition surveys (n=6) conducted between 2006 and 2012 were below 20 bulls:100 cows, which led to the implementation of a quota system to improve the ratios in RY2013. Biologists observed 21 and 28 bulls:100 cows during surveys conducted in 2014 and 2015, respectively.

The Seward Peninsula muskox population stabilized between 2012 and 2015. The 2015 population estimate within the core range that includes hunting is 1,853 ±10% (95% CI: 1,541-2,285) muskox. Muskox numbers in Unit 22C increased 24% since 2012, which is likely the result of an overall shift in distribution of the Seward Peninsula population. Spring composition surveys completed in 2016 estimated 4% (95% CI: 2%-6%) short yearlings in Unit 22C. High numbers of muskox around the Nome area continue to present management complications related to nuisance muskox near homes, trails, and airports. Anecdotal information suggests brown bear predation on muskox groups may influence muskox distribution and their presence in the Nome area.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal because it has not identified biological concerns associated with brown bear harvests in Unit 22C. The department will continue to monitor brown bear harvest in this area to evaluate the effect of increased hunting opportunity and ensure sustainable harvest patterns occur.

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

PROPOSAL 31–5 AAC 85.020. Hunting seasons and bag limits for brown bear. Increase the bag limit for brown bear in Unit 22B.

PROPOSED BY: Kawerak, Inc., Nome Eskimo Community

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would increase the Unit 22B brown bear bag limit to two bears every regulatory year.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The brown bear seasons and bag limits for Unit 22B are as follows:

The resident hunting season is August 1–May 31 with a bag limit of 1 bear every year.

The nonresident hunting season is August 1–May 31 with a bag limit of 1 bear every year, by drawing permit only. The nonresident drawing hunt (DB685) area includes Unit 22B and Unit 22C and issues up to 27 permits annually.

There's a positive C&T for brown bears in Units 21 and 22, and an ANS of 20–25 in both units combined.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal would increase the Unit 22B bag limit from 1 bear every regulatory year to 2 bears every regulatory year.

BACKGROUND: The board has incrementally liberalized brown bear regulations in Unit 22 since 1997 by lengthening seasons, increasing bag limits, and adopting tag exemptions for Alaska residents to increase brown bear hunting opportunity.

Unit 22B brown bear sealing records indicate an average annual harvest of 22 bears from RY1990–1997, and an average annual harvest of 26 from RY1998–RY2015. The reported harvest data has met the management goal of sustaining an annual reported harvest of at least 50% boars based on a 3-year average. Unit 22B sealing records indicate 67% (116 of 173) of bears taken from RY1990–RY1997 were boars, and 61% (288 of 469) of bears taken from RY1998–RY2015 were boars. Unit 22 brown bear sealing records from RY1990–RY2015 indicate 63–96% of Unit 22B brown bear harvest occurs in the remainder of Unit 22B and 75% (281 of 373) of the bears harvested from RY1998–RY2015 were taken by Alaska resident hunters.

Moose recruitment rates in the remainder of Unit 22B have been $\leq 10\%$ from 1999–2013. The 2016 population recruitment rate of 14% is the first increase in recruitment observed since 1992.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal because it has not identified conservation concerns associated with brown bear population in this area, and the bag limit increase is not expected to increase harvest significantly. However, if the board chooses to adopt this proposal, the department recommends the increased bag limit be implemented in the western portion of Unit 22B, known as the remainder of Unit 22B.

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

PROPOSAL 32 – 5 AAC 85.020. Hunting seasons and bag limits for brown bear. Lengthen the hunting season for brown bear in the southern portion of Unit 22A.

PROPOSED BY: John Wilson

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would lengthen the brown bear hunting season in the southern portion of Unit 22A by 15 days by changing the closure date from May 31 to June 15.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The brown bear hunting season in Unit 22A, south of and including the Golsovia River drainage, is August 1–May 31. The resident bag limit is 2 bears per year, and the nonresident bag limit is 1 bear per year.

The brown bear hunting season in the remainder of Unit 22A is August 1–June 15. The resident bag limit is 2 bears per year, and the nonresident bag limit is 1 bear per year.

There's a positive C&T for brown bears in Units 21 and 22, and an ANS of 20–25 in both units combined.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The season in Unit 22A, south of and including the Golsovia River (Unit 22A South), would be lengthened 15 days to close June 15, instead of May 31.

BACKGROUND: In 2005, the Board of Game adopted regulations to increase the Unit 22A bag limit for Alaska residents to 2 bears every regulatory year and 1 bear every regulatory year for nonresidents. The average annual Unit 22A harvest increased from 27 bears from RY1998–RY2005 to 35 bears from RY2006–RY2015, which is a 30% increase between the two time periods. The average annual increase in Unit 22A was a result of increased resident and nonresident participation and not a result of the 2 bear bag limit for residents. Unit 22A harvest data between RY2006 and RY2015 indicate an average 1 resident hunter per year uses the two bear per regulatory year bag limit.

The proposal would change the season in Unit 22A South where brown bears are highly vulnerable to harvest when they congregate along the coast to feed on herring and herring spawn on kelp in late May and early June. Harvest data from this remote portion of Unit 22A show that bears are accessible by boat and off road vehicles, accounting for 77% of the methods used to harvest bears from RY2006–RY2015.

Nonresident hunters are the primary source of brown bear harvest in Unit 22A South. Nonresident hunters harvested 78% (n=71) of bears harvested from RY1998–RY2005 and 71% (n=66) from RY2006–RY2015.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **OPPOSED** to lengthening the brown bear season in Unit 22A South because the harvest may be unsustainable due to the ease of access during a time when bears are concentrated on the coast. Additionally, because the hunt is not administered through a permit hunt structure, the department will not be able to monitor and regulate the harvest in-season. The brown bear season in the remainder of Unit 22A already extends until June 15 and would not be affected by this proposal.

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

PROPOSAL 33 – 5 AAC 85.045(24). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.
Reauthorize the antlerless moose seasons in Unit 26A.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

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

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Antlerless moose hunts for residents are allowed in the portion of Unit 26A west of 156° 00' W. longitude, excluding the Colville River drainage, where antlerless hunting through a 1 moose bag limit is allowed July 1–September 14.

There is a positive C&T for moose in Unit 26, and an ANS of 21–48, including 15–20 in Unit 26A.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The antlerless moose hunt in the portion of Unit 26A west of 156° 00' W longitude and north of the Colville drainage would be reauthorized. Because antlerless moose seasons were closed due to population declines in the remainder of the unit, only the western portion of Unit 26A has a hunt affected by this proposal.

BACKGROUND: The moose population is low in Unit 26A and has declined since 2008. The minimum population count declined from 1,180 moose in 2008 to 610 moose in 2011. The population grew slowly from 2011–2013 but declined again to 294 moose in 2014. No count was completed in 2016. Reported moose harvest in recent years has remained low: 13 moose in 2010, 5 in 2011, 9 in 2012, 6 in 2013, 2 in 2014, and 3 in 2015.

The portion of Unit 26A west of 156° 00' W longitude and north of the Colville drainage does not have a year-round moose population. Moose occasionally disperse away from the major river drainages to the coastal plain during summer months, and these are the only moose available for harvest in this northwestern portion of Unit 26A. The small number of antlerless moose harvested under the hunt have very little impact on the size of the population. To date, after

several years of hunting opportunity in this area, only 3 antlerless moose have been harvested: 1 cow in 2006, 1 in 2008, and 1 in 2014. Keeping an antlerless moose season in this portion of Unit 26A provides additional opportunity in a portion of the state that generally does not have moose.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal. Antlerless harvests in the western section of Unit 26A are anticipated to be very low and have little impact on the population.

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

PROPOSAL 34 – 5 AAC 85.057 Hunting seasons and bag limits for wolverine. Lengthen the wolverine season in Unit 26.

PROPOSED BY: Aaron Bloomquist

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would change the opening date of the wolverine hunting season from September 1 to July 15.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The wolverine hunting season in Unit 26A is September 1–March 31 with a bag limit of 1 wolverine per year.

There is a positive C&T for wolverines as furbearers in all units with a harvestable portion, and an ANS of 90% of the harvestable surplus.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal increases the opportunity to harvest wolverines by 1.5 months during the summer in Unit 26A by opening the hunting season on July 15.

BACKGROUND: This proposal is scheduled for the Arctic/Western Region meeting as Proposal 34, and the Interior/Northeast Arctic Region meeting as Proposal 114.

The department does not have a wolverine population estimate for Unit 26A.

July and August are important months in the life cycle of female wolverines and their kits because the harvest of females with young during may result in a decreased survival rate of kits. Female wolverines with kits wean their young from late July through early August. Females and their young of the year are highly visible and active during July and August, but may not be easily recognized as a family group due to the size of the offspring and periodic separation of the family unit.

Harvest data indicate an average of 20 wolverines have been taken annually since 2000. Annual harvest has been variable, ranging from 6 to 34 wolverines, and there is no apparent increasing or decreasing trend since 2000.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal because it is unlikely to result in a substantial increase in wolverine harvest. However, an early opening of the wolverine hunting season in Unit 26 has the potential to reduce kit survival, which could affect population abundance.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal would not result in additional costs for the department.

PROPOSAL 35 – 5 AAC 85.056. Hunting seasons and bag limits for wolf. Lengthen the hunting season for wolves in Units 24–26 by 11 days.

PROPOSED BY: Aaron Bloomquist

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? As applied to the Arctic/Western Region, this proposal changes the hunting season for wolves in Unit 26A from August 10–April 30 to July 31–April 20.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The wolf hunting season in Unit 26A is August 10–April 30 with a bag limit of 10 wolves per year.

There is a positive C&T for wolves in Unit 26A, with an ANS of 4–8.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal would shift the wolf hunting season in Unit 26A forward by 11 days. Wolves could be harvested starting July 31, which would provide additional opportunity to hunters that may be hunting caribou or grizzly bears in Unit 26A. The season would close April 20 which would reduce late season opportunity for hunters to harvest prime furs by 10 days, and the close of the hunting season would no longer coincide with the close of the trapping season, which is April 30.

BACKGROUND: This proposal is scheduled for the Arctic/Western Region meeting as Proposal 35 and the Interior/Northeast Arctic Region meeting as Proposal 99.

On average 3 wolves have been harvested each year in Unit 26A for the past 5 years during August 15-August 31. On average 3 wolves have been harvested each year for the past 5 years during the month of April.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal because it is unlikely that the change in harvest would result in a biological concern. If the board chooses to adopt this proposal the department recommends retaining the current hunting season closure date

of April 30 to provide hunters additional opportunity to harvest wolves while their pelts are in their prime.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal would not result in additional costs for the department.

(The following comment was revised 11/9/2016; the revision is available on the Board of Game meeting information website at: www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=gameboard.meetinginfo&date=01-06-2017&meeting=bethel)

PROPOSAL 36 – 5 AAC 85.045(a)(21). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose. Reauthorize the antlerless moose seasons in Unit 23.

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? There are two moose hunt areas in Unit 23 and each area has an antlerless moose season from November 1–December 31. The hunt areas are:

- 1) Unit 23 north of and including the Singoalik River drainage, and
- 2) Remainder of Unit 23.

The bag limit in each area is one moose; however, the taking of calves or cows accompanied by calves is prohibited by codified regulation for registration permit (RM880).

There is a positive C&T for moose in Unit 23, and an ANS of 325–400 moose.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If the antlerless moose hunts in Unit 23 are reauthorized, resident hunters will be able to use a registration permit to harvest antlerless moose during November and December on state-managed lands in Unit 23.

BACKGROUND: The estimated moose population in Unit 23 is 7,500 moose, which is within the intensive management objectives of 3,500–9,200 moose. The harvestable surplus is 450. The 10-year average reported harvest is 153 moose, which is below the amount reasonably necessary for subsistence (325– 400 moose) and intensive management harvest objective (210– 920 moose). Per capita harvest rates from 38 data points results in an estimated 274 moose harvested annually by residents of Unit 23 communities.

Aerial censuses indicate low moose densities exist throughout Unit 23 and are declining throughout most of the unit. The Selawik and Tagagawik, Lower Noatak, and Lower Kobuk river drainages comprise approximately 80% of the surveyed moose populations in Unit 23. The Selawik and Tagagawik moose population declined 12% annually between 2011 and 2016. The Lower Noatak moose population declined 8% annually between 2008 and 2013, and the Lower Kobuk moose population declined 5% annually between 2006 and 2012.

The resident registration permit hunt RM880 was implemented in RY2004 as a way to retain antlerless opportunity through substantially shortened season, which limited 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 less than 15 cows annually over the last 20 years. However, 21 cows were taken in RY2015.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department submitted, but **OPPOSES** the reauthorization of the antlerless hunt in Unit 23 due to conservation concerns. The department recommends **AMENDING** the regulation to only allow the harvest of bull moose during the November 1–December 31 hunting season. Future hunting season and bag limit restrictions may be needed in Unit 23 for nonresidents and residents, and restricting antlerless harvest and a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses of this population is a first step to respond to declining moose numbers.

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

PROPOSAL 37 –5 AAC 85.020(21). Nonresident brown season in Unit 23. Lengthen the nonresident fall hunting season for brown bear in Unit 23.

PROPOSED BY: Stan Parkerson

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would change the opening date of the brown bear hunting season in Unit 23 from September 1 to August 1 for nonresidents.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Unit 23 nonresident brown bear hunting regulations are administered through drawing permits (up to 68 may be issued) and registration permits with a bag limit of 1 bear per regulatory year. All 68 drawing permits were issued for RY2015. Both permit systems use fall and spring seasons that take place September 1–October 31 and April 15–May 31.

There is a positive C&T for brown bears in Units 23, 24, and 26, and an ANS of 25–35 in all three units combined.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The proposal would add 31 days to the fall brown bear season for nonresidents by beginning the season on August 1, aligning it with the opening day of the resident season.

BACKGROUND: A mark-recapture (with a sightability correction factor) brown bear survey completed in 1987 near the Red Dog mine resulted in 1 total bear per 26 mi². In 2008, a non-invasive, mark-resight survey (without a sightability correction factor) completed in the same area found 3.4 total bears per 26 mi².

Average annual total harvest, resident and nonresident, was 50 bears (range 30–78) between 1995 and 2005 and 55 (range 33–71) bears between 2005 and 2015. Even though annual harvests can differ considerably between years, there is a 9% increase between the two time periods, which indicates a slow increase in harvest over time.

The harvest ratio between female and male bears appears stable. Between 1995 and 2005, total harvest, resident and nonresident, was 29% females and 71% males. Between 2006 and 2015, harvest was 28% females and 72% males.

Unit 23 moose populations decreased 8% annually from 2008 to 2016. Composition ratios remained stable, above 40 bull:100 cows, during the same time period. Calf:cow ratios have averaged 10 calves:100 cows since 2010.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal. Harvest data and survey results indicate the average annual total harvest of 55 bears per year since 2005 is sustainable. The department will continue to monitor brown bear harvest to manage for a sustainable brown bear harvest in Unit 23.

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

PROPOSAL 38 –5 AAC 85.020(21). Hunting seasons and bag limits for brown bear. Lengthen the nonresident fall hunting season for brown bear in Unit 23.

PROPOSED BY: Anchorage Fish and Game Advisory Committee

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal changes the opening date of the fall bear season for nonresidents hunting in Unit 23 from September 1 to August 20.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Unit 23 nonresident brown bear hunting regulations are administered through drawing permits (up to 68 may be issued) and registration permits with a bag limit of one bear per regulatory year. All 68 drawing permits were issued for RY2015. Both permit systems use fall and spring seasons that take place September 1–October 31 and April 15–May 31.

There is a positive C&T for brown bears in Units 23, 24, and 26, and an ANS of 25–35 in all three units combined.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The proposal would add 12 days to the fall brown bear season for nonresidents by beginning the season on August 20.

BACKGROUND: A mark-recapture (with a sightability correction factor) brown bear survey completed in 1987 near the Red Dog mine resulted in 1 total bear per 26 mi². In 2008, a non-invasive, mark-resight survey (without a sightability correction factor) completed in the same area found 3.4 total bears per 26 mi².

Average annual total harvest, resident and nonresident, was 50 bears (range 30–78) between 1995 and 2005 and 55 (range 33–71) bears between 2005 and 2015. Even though annual harvests can differ considerably between years, there is a 9% increase between the two time periods, which indicates a slow increase in harvest over time.

The harvest ratio between female and male bears appears stable. Between 1995 and 2005, total harvest was 29% females and 71% males. Between 2006 and 2015, harvest was 28% females and 72% males.

Unit 23 moose populations decreased 8% annually from 2008 to 2016. Composition ratios remained stable, above 40 bull:100 cows, during the same time period. Calf:cow ratios averaged 10 calves:100 cows since 2010.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal. Harvest data and survey results indicate the average annual total harvest of 55 bears per year since 2005 is sustainable. The department will continue to monitor brown bear harvest to manage for a sustainable brown bear harvest in Unit 23.

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

PROPOSAL 39 –5 AAC 85.020(21). Hunting seasons and bag limits for brown bear.
Lengthen the nonresident fall hunting season for brown bear in Unit 23.

PROPOSED BY: E. Mont Mahoney

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal changes the opening date of the fall bear season for nonresidents hunting in Unit 23 from September 1 to August 25.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Unit 23 nonresident brown bear hunting regulations are administered through drawing permits (up to 68 may be issued) and registration

permits with a bag limit of one bear per regulatory year. All 68 drawing permits were issued for RY2015. Both permit systems use fall and spring seasons that take place September 1–October 31 and April 15–May 31.

There is a positive C&T for brown bears in Units 23, 24, and 26, and an ANS of 25–35 in all three units combined.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The proposal would add 7 days to the fall brown bear season for nonresidents by beginning the season on August 25.

BACKGROUND: A mark-recapture (with a sightability correction factor) brown bear survey completed in 1987 near the Red Dog mine resulted in 1 total bear per 26 mi². In 2008, a non-invasive, mark-resight survey (without a sightability correction factor) completed in the same area found 3.4 total bears per 26 mi².

Average annual total harvest, resident and nonresident, was 50 bears (range 30–78) between 1995 and 2005 and 55 (range 33–71) bears between 2005 and 2015. Even though annual harvests can differ considerably between years, there is a 9% increase between the two time periods, which indicates a slow increase in harvest over time.

The harvest ratio between female and male bears appears stable. Between 1995 and 2005, total harvest was 29% females and 71% males. Between 2006 and 2015, harvest was 28% females and 72% males.

Unit 23 moose populations decreased 8% annually from 2008 to 2016. Composition ratios remained stable, above 40 bull:100 cows, during the same time period. Calf:cow ratios averaged 10 calves:100 cows since 2010.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal. Harvest data and survey results indicate the average annual total harvest of 55 bears per year since 2005 is sustainable. The department will continue to monitor brown bear harvest to manage for a sustainable brown bear harvest in Unit 23.

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

PROPOSAL 40 –5 AAC 85.020(21). Hunting seasons and bag limits for brown bear. Increase the resident bag limit for brown bear in Unit 23.

PROPOSED BY: James Bourquin and the Kotzebue Fish and Game Advisory Committee

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would increase the resident brown bear bag limit from 1 bear every regulatory year to 2 bears every regulatory year.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The Unit 23 brown bear hunting season for residents is August 1–May 31 with a bag limit of 1 bear per regulatory year.

There is a positive C&T for brown bears in Units 23, 24, and 26, and an ANS of 25–35 in all three units combined.

There is a subsistence registration permit with a season from August 1–May 31 (RB700) with a one bear per regulatory year bag limit. Under the subsistence registration permit, meat must be salvaged for human consumption, and the hide and skull do not need to be sealed unless the bear is removed from the subsistence registration permit area or presented for commercial tanning. Also, the use of aircraft is prohibited.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The proposal would increase the resident bag limit for brown bears in Unit 23 to 2 bears per year. The sale of brown bear skulls and hides with claws attached would also be legal, because 5 AAC 92.200 allows the sale of those parts in areas where the brown bear bag limit is 2 bears per year.

BACKGROUND: A mark-recapture (with a sightability correction factor) brown bear survey completed in 1987 near the Red Dog mine resulted in 1 total bear per 26 mi². In 2008, a non-invasive, mark-resight survey (without a sightability correction factor) completed in the same area found 3.4 total bears per 26 mi².

Average annual total harvest, resident and nonresident, was 50 bears (range 30–78) between 1995 and 2005 and 55 (range 33–71) bears between 2005 and 2015. Even though annual harvests can differ considerably between years, there is a 9% increase between the two time periods, which indicates a slow increase in harvest over time.

The harvest ratio between female and male bears appears stable. Between 1995 and 2005, total harvest was 29% females and 71% males. Between 2006 and 2015, harvest was 28% females and 72% males.

Unit 23 moose populations decreased 8% annually from 2008 to 2016. Composition ratios remained stable, above 40 bull:100 cows, during the same time period. Calf:cow ratios averaged 10 calves:100 cows since 2010.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal to provide additional opportunity to the few hunters who choose to use it. Experience with a 2 brown bear bag limit in other areas indicates that the change will not result in a substantial increase in harvest.

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

PROPOSAL 41 –5 AAC 92.050. Required permit hunt conditions and procedures. Require a guide-client agreement to apply for a nonresident brown bear drawing permit in Unit 23.

PROPOSED BY: E. Mont Mahoney

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would require guide-client agreements to apply for a nonresident brown bear drawing permit in Unit 23.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? 5AAC 92.050. Required hunt conditions and procedures.

(a)(1) (A) to apply for a drawing permit hunt, for any hunt that requires a registered or master guide, a nonresident or a nonresident alien must contract a qualified registered guide or master guide as their agent to submit the application and provide hunting services; the contracting registered guide or master guide, shall provide, at the time of application, their current unique verification code that has been issued to them pursuant to 12 AAC 75.260(d);

(a)(1)(B) the requirement in 5 AAC 92.050(a)(1)(A) does not apply if the applicant is a nonresident and will be accompanied by a resident over 19 years of age who is a spouse or a relative within the second degree of kindred, as described in AS 16.05.407(a);

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? There will be no effect if this proposal is adopted because the requirement already exists in regulation.

BACKGROUND: The Board of Game adopted regulations during the March 2016 Statewide Board meeting that requires all nonresidents and nonresident aliens hunting guides to obtain a guide-client agreement prior to applying for a drawing hunt.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department recommends **TAKING NO ACTION** on this proposal because the requirement already exists for nonresidents hunting with an Alaska-licensed guide.

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

PROPOSAL 42 –5 AAC 92.044. Permit for hunting bear with the use of bait or scent lures. Allow the use of bait for black and brown bears hunting in Unit 23.

PROPOSED BY: Jared Cummings

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would allow brown and black bears to be taken over bait in Unit 23 during April 15–October 15.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Unit 23 is currently not open to bear baiting.

The brown bear hunting season for resident hunters is August 1–May 31 with a bag limit of bear per year.

There is a positive C&T for brown bears in Units 23, 24, and 26, and an ANS of 25–35 in all three units combined. There is a subsistence registration permit hunt (RB700) from August 1–May 31 with a 1 bear per year bag limit. Under the subsistence registration permit, meat must be salvaged for human consumption, the hide and skull do not need to be sealed unless the bear is removed from the subsistence registration permit area or presented for commercial tanning, and the use of aircraft is prohibited.

The brown bear hunting season for nonresident hunters is September 1–October 31 and April 15–May 31 with a bag limit of 1 bear per year. The nonresident hunts are administered through a combination of drawing permits (up to 68 may be issued) and registration permits. All 68 drawing permits were issued for RY2015.

The black bear season for residents and nonresidents is open year-round and has a bag limit of 3 black bears per year. The board has not made a C&T determination for black bear populations in Unit 23.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal would allow brown and black bears to be taken over bait in Unit 23. Baiting is currently prohibited on National Park and Preserve and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service lands, so the passage of this proposal would not open bear baiting on those lands.

BACKGROUND: Bear baiting has been authorized in many areas of the state to provide additional harvest opportunity. To date, the department has not detected a significant increase in harvest in these areas that would affect the status of the population, and no public safety issues have been reported.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal because it has not identified a biological concern for black or brown bear populations in Unit 23. Adoption of this proposal is not expected to increase bear harvest significantly.

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

PROPOSAL 43 – 5 AAC 92.080 (4-5). Unlawful methods of taking game; exceptions.
Allow the use of snowmachines to position and harvest brown bears and furbearers in Unit 23.

PROPOSED BY: Kotzebue Fish and Game Advisory Committee

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would allow the use of snowmachines to position a brown bear or furbearer for harvest and allow brown bears and furbearers to be shot from a stationery snowmachine in Unit 23.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Current regulations (92.080 (4-5)) allow a motor-driven boat be used to take caribou in Unit 23. There is also a provision that allows the use of snowmachines to position caribou, wolves, and wolverines for harvest and allows these species to be shot from a stationary snowmachine.

In 5 AAC 92.990(a)(32) a “furbearer” means a beaver, black bear, coyote, arctic fox, red fox, lynx, fisher, marten, mink, least weasel, short-tailed weasel, muskrat, land otter, red squirrel, flying squirrel, ground squirrel, Alaskan marmot, hoary marmot, woodchuck, wolf, or wolverine; “furbearer” is a classification of animals subject to taking with a trapping license

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal would broaden the current regulations (92.080 (4-5)) to include brown bears and furbearers. It would allow hunters to use snowmachines to position brown bears, caribou, wolves, wolverines, and other furbearers for harvest, and it would also allow hunters to shoot these animals from a stationary snowmachine.

BACKGROUND: The Board of Game adopted regulations in 2014 to allow the use of snowmachines in Unit 23 to track and pursue caribou, wolves, and wolverines. The board received testimony that the use of snowmachines was a common local method of hunting, was the only practical method of hunting during winter months, allowed for precise shot placement, and minimized unnecessary waste of meat and fur.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the methods and means proposed because no biological concerns have been identified for brown bear and furbearer populations in Unit 23.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal would not result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 44 – 5 AAC 92.540 9 (i) Controlled use areas. Modify the area of the Noatak Controlled Use Area in Unit 23.

PROPOSED BY: Noatak/Kivalina and Kotzebue Sound Fish and Game Advisory Committees

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would extend the Noatak Controlled Use area approximately 70 river miles upstream, changing the upstream border from Sapun Creek to the Cutler River.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? 92.540 Controlled use areas. In the following areas, access for hunting is controlled as specified:

...

(9) Unit 23:

(A) the Noatak Controlled Use Area:

(i) the area consists of that portion of unit 23 in a corridor extending five miles on either side of, and including, the Noatak River, including the river, beginning at the mouth of the Noatak River, and extending upstream to the mouth of Sapun Creek;

(ii) the area is closed from August 15 through September 30 to the use of aircraft in any manner for big game hunting, including the transportation of big game hunters, their hunting gear, or parts of big game; however, this provision does not apply to the transportation of big game hunters, their hunting gear, or parts of big game to and between publicly owned airports;

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The expansion of the controlled use area would reduce hunting-related air traffic over the majority of the Noatak River and potentially concentrate it in other areas. The majority of potential alternate hunting locations are federal lands, which are closed to hunters who do not qualify to participate in federal subsistence hunt at this time.

The effect that this reallocation of flying activity would have on caribou movements, success rates of hunters that do not use aircraft, or user conflicts is unknown.

BACKGROUND: The proponent notes that there are continued user conflicts near the current boundary of the controlled use area. The original Noatak River controlled use area was instituted in 1988 in an attempt to alleviate conflict between local hunters, who access the area primarily by boat, and aircraft-supported hunters, many of whom are visiting the area from other parts of the state or from outside the state. In 1994, the area was expanded to its current boundary at Sapun Creek, and the duration was reduced to more effectively reduce conflicts; there was a secondary goal of reducing moose harvest. The restriction dates were adjusted again in 2009 to accommodate variation in fall timing in caribou migration.

Consistent with this proposal, other proposals for controlled use areas related to caribou in Region V revolve around large scale disturbance of migration by aircraft, and by hunters who have been dropped off by aircraft, camp placement on migration routes, and competition for caribou crossing rivers, resulting in a reduction in success by local hunters, who primarily utilize river systems in the fall. In the last few years, Western Arctic caribou herd (WAH) fall migrations have typically been concentrated to the west and east of the lower Noatak. The result is that caribou have been more difficult to access from Noatak, and local hunters are increasingly likely to use areas near and beyond the current boundary of the controlled use area. Caribou harvests at Noatak documented since 1994 show a decline in annual community harvests.

The Unit 23 User Conflict Working Group was formed in 2008 to formulate recommendations for addressing user conflict issues. Recommendations have included changes to dates and spatial extent of the Noatak Controlled Use Area, in part to accommodate variation in caribou migration timing and routing, as well as a series of unsuccessful efforts to expand the authority of the Big Game Commercial Services Board to include the activities of air taxi operators, as opposed to only guides and transporters. Other actions have included enhanced inter-agency communication, and a broad array of educational efforts, including the requirement for pilots involved in hunting to take an orientation course regarding big game hunting and meat transportation in Unit 23.

Based on harvest ticket data, unit-wide, the number of visiting hunters has gradually declined to approximately 60% of the average observed in the late 1990s. Numbers of visiting hunters in guide use areas that border the current controlled use area also reflect this pattern, with the most notable drop occurring since 2007. Changes in the number of visiting hunters is potentially related to multiple factors, including changes in caribou abundance, bag limits, changes in the guiding and transporting businesses in the area, or larger economic factors. Federal actions within the Noatak National Park and Preserve (NNP&P) include a cap on commercial operators and clients as well as a delayed entry system for transporters in the western portion of NNP&P.

Educational efforts and focused law enforcement efforts may also have played a role. Despite some success in reducing tensions, user conflict remains an issue in some areas of the WAH range, and particularly in Unit 23, the unit that hosts the largest proportion of hunters visiting Alaska to hunt the WAH. The most recent attempt to address user conflict was a special action request submitted by the Northwest Arctic Regional Subsistence Advisory Council to close federal lands to non-federally qualified caribou hunters in Unit 23.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocation of caribou hunting opportunity that would result from the adoption of this proposal; however, reasonable opportunity for success in harvesting a caribou for subsistence uses should be considered during deliberation of this proposal.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal would not result in additional costs for the department.

PROPOSAL 45 – 5 AAC 92.540 9 (i, ii) Controlled use areas. Require big game hunting camps to be three miles apart within and near the Noatak Controlled Use Area.

PROPOSED BY: Noatak/Kivalina and Kotzebue Sound Fish and Game Advisory Committees

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would require big game hunting camps to be spaced three miles apart within the Noatak Controlled Use Area (CUA) and along the Agashashok, Eli, and Squirrel rivers.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There are currently no regulations over the location or spacing of hunting camps.

92.540 Controlled use areas. In the following areas, access for hunting is controlled as specified:

...

(9) Unit 23:

(A) the Noatak Controlled Use Area:

(i) the area consists of that portion of unit 23 in a corridor extending five miles on either side of, and including, the Noatak River, including the river, beginning at the mouth of the Noatak River, and extending upstream to the mouth of Sapun Creek;

(ii) the area is closed from August 15 through September 30 to the use of aircraft in any manner for big game hunting, including the transportation of big game hunters, their hunting gear, or parts of big game; however, this provision does not apply to the transportation of big game hunters, their hunting gear, or parts of big game to and between publicly owned airports;

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? The proposal would establish a requirement that all hunting camps, regardless of method of access (aircraft, boat, foot) be spaced three miles apart within the Noatak Controlled Use Area and along the Agashashok, Eli, and Squirrel rivers; however, the proponent doesn't specify how the department would administer this change. Options may include expanding the current CUA to include the Agashashok, Eli, and Squirrel rivers or adopting a regulation to allow the department to use discretionary permit authority to require the spacing of camps if a registration permit hunt structure is adopted, which will be considered in Proposal 2.

An expansion of the controlled use area would reduce hunting-related air traffic over the majority of the Noatak River and potentially concentrate it in other areas. Many of the potentially alternate hunting locations are federal lands, which are closed to hunters who do not qualify to participate in federal subsistence hunt at this time.

The effect that this reallocation of flying activity would have on caribou movements, success rates of hunters that do not use aircraft, or user conflicts is unknown.

BACKGROUND: The proponent notes that there are continued user conflicts near the current boundary of the controlled use area. The original Noatak River controlled use area was instituted in 1988 in an attempt to alleviate user conflicts. In 1994, the area was expanded, and the duration was reduced to more effectively reduce conflicts, with a secondary goal of reducing moose harvest. The dates were readjusted in 2010, with the intent of better accommodating variations in the timing of fall caribou migration.

Consistent with this proposal, other proposals for hunting camp spacing related to caribou in Region V revolve around large scale disturbance of migration by aircraft and by hunters who have been dropped off by aircraft, camp placement on migration routes, and competition for caribou crossing rivers, resulting in a reduction in success by local hunters, who primarily utilize rivers systems in the fall. A particular concern addressed in this proposal is the perception that high densities of hunters in some areas can influence caribou movements. In recent years, it is common for WAH fall migrations to have been concentrated to the west and east of the lower Noatak. The result is that caribou have been more difficult to access from Noatak, and local hunters are increasingly likely to use areas near and beyond the current boundary of the controlled use area. Caribou harvests at Noatak documented since 1994 show a decline in annual community harvests.

The Unit 23 User Conflict Working Group was formed in 2008 to formulate recommendations for addressing user conflict issues. Recommendations have included changes to dates and spatial extent of the Noatak Controlled Use Area, in part to accommodate variation in caribou migration timing and routing, as well as unsuccessful efforts to expand the authority of the Big Game Commercial Services Board to include the activities of air taxi operators, as opposed to only guides and transporters. Other actions have included enhanced inter-agency communication, and a broad array of educational efforts, including the requirement for pilots involved in hunting to take an orientation course regarding big game hunting and meat transportation in Unit 23.

Based on harvest ticket data, unit-wide, the number of visiting hunters has gradually declined to approximately 60% of the average observed in the late 1990s. Numbers of visiting hunters in guide use areas that border the current controlled use area also reflect this pattern with the most notable drop occurring since 2007. Changes in the number of visiting hunters is potentially related to multiple factors, including changes in caribou abundance, bag limits, changes in the guiding and transporting businesses in the area, or larger economic factors. Federal actions within the Noatak National Park and Preserve include a cap on commercial operators and clients as well as a delayed entry system for transporters in the western part of NP&P.

Educational efforts and focused law enforcement efforts may also have played a role. Despite some success in reducing tensions, user conflict remains an issue in some areas of the WAH

range, and particularly in Unit 23, the unit that hosts the largest proportion of hunters visiting Alaska to hunt the WAH. The most recent attempt to address user conflict was a special action request submitted by the Northwest Arctic Regional Subsistence Advisory Council to close federal lands to non-federally qualified caribou hunters in Unit 23.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal because it does not address a biological concern for the caribou population and allocates hunting opportunities on a spatial scale. If the board adopts this proposal the department requests board guidance on how to implement the regulation.

Providing reasonable opportunity for success in harvesting a caribou for subsistence uses should be considered during deliberation of this proposal.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal would not result in additional costs for the department.
