

Alaska Board of Game
Findings 2000 -134 BOG
Unit 4 Brown Bear Management Strategy

At its meeting in Juneau, Alaska, November 1-7, 2000, the Board of Game (Board) received the Unit 4 Brown Bear Management Strategy (Strategy), heard a summary of the Strategy presented by the Unit 4 Brown Bear Planning Team (Team), and considered public testimony on the subject. Based on this information, and in consideration of the Board's statutory authorities and requirements, the Board supports the Strategy as indicated by the endorsement of these Findings.

The Board reached the following conclusions:

1. The planning process used by the Team involved a wide range of public and agency interests in formulating comprehensive management recommendations for Unit 4 brown bears.
2. The recommendations in the Strategy are a comprehensive compromise package. To maintain the integrity of the compromise embodied in the Strategy, all essential elements must be implemented in a timely and reasonable manner.
3. Recommendations in the Strategy are both within and outside the jurisdiction of the Board. Recommendations within the jurisdiction of the Board include setting mortality guidelines, prioritizing options for hunting regulation changes should the mortality guidelines be exceeded, and adjusting regulations as needed to assist management of bear hunting/viewing areas.
4. As previously determined by the Board, brown bears in Unit 4 are customarily and traditionally used for subsistence and the amount necessary for subsistence uses is 5-10 bears. Recently, the Federal Subsistence Board, in response to a proposal by the Southeast Regional Federal Subsistence Council, authorized five federal registration permits annually for educational purposes of teaching customary and traditional subsistence harvest and use practices. The Board supports this action as long as the risk of overharvest is minimized.
5. The existing codified regulations governing the taking of Unit 4 brown bears (5 AAC 85.020) provide a framework within which the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (Department) can administer hunts consistent with the harvest recommendations in the Strategy through exercise of discretionary authority vested in the Department under 5 AAC 92.052. Therefore, no changes are necessary in the codified regulations to implement the recommendations of the Strategy with respect to harvest.

Based on these findings, the Board:

1. Supports the package of recommendations from the Team and urges other agencies and entities with the power to implement these recommendations to do so.

2. Requests the Department to manage hunting of Unit 4 brown bears to maintain a total 3-year average human-caused mortality guideline that does not exceed 4% of each island (Admiralty, Baranof, Chichagof, Northeast Chichagof) population, and a total 3-year average human-caused female mortality guideline that does not exceed 1.5% of each island population.
3. Requests that the Department follow the recommended priority for hunting regulation changes should the mortality guidelines be exceeded. They are:
 - In the event that human-caused mortality guidelines are exceeded for one season or year, the Department will attempt to change the next year's outcome by obtaining voluntary harvest adjustment from guides and hunters.
 - In the event that documented human-caused mortality calculated on a 3-year average is exceeded, the following options will be evaluated and implemented if appropriate.
 - 1) Mandatory adjustment of number of guided hunters by US Forest Service (USFS).
 - 2) Season adjustments.
 - 3) Establish drawing permits for nonresidents on a Guide Use Area basis.
 - 4) Establish drawing permits for residents only after above management alternatives have been employed.
 - All non-subsistence hunting by residents will, when necessary, be by registration permit, until the resident harvest exceeds 70% of the harvest guideline for a given population. If resident harvest exceeds 70% of the harvest guideline, institute a resident drawing permit hunt.
 - Consider all proposed regulatory actions or steps in the context of their effect on bear harvest in the entire Southeast Alaska region, not just Unit 4.
 - Cooperate with the USFS in management of habitat and access.
4. Will strive to bring State regulations into harmony with Federal subsistence regulations that provide additional opportunity to take brown bears under an educational permit for the purposes of teaching customary and traditional subsistence harvest and use practices.
5. Supports the concept of Brown Bear Special Use Zone (SUZ) management that accommodates both hunting and viewing and will consider seasons, methods and means, limited area closures and other regulations as necessary on a case-by-case basis to implement SUZ's in appropriate areas in Unit 4. Will consider use of this model for viewing area proposals elsewhere in Alaska.
6. Supports the concept of Human/Bear High Use Zone management that aims to keep key riparian and shore habitat available to bears and requests the Department cooperate with the USFS in the identification of such zones, and will consider regulations as necessary on a case-by-case basis to implement appropriate management in these zones.

7. Encourages the USFS to incorporate the team's recommendations in its Saltwater Shoreline-based Outfitter/Guide Analysis and Environmental Impact Statement for the northern Tongass National Forest.
6. Supports the USFS moratoria on guides and hunts in Units 1 and 4, pending the outcome of the ongoing USFS planning process.
7. Requests the Department to Prepare and distribute educational materials on hunter ethics and other information to help minimize wounding loss and the harvest of females.

Vote: 7 - 0
November 9, 2000

Lori Quakenbush

Lori Quakenbush, Chair
Alaska Board of Game