

Hunting and Trapping

Emergency Order

Alaska Department
of Fish and Game

Under the Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order 05-10-15

Issued at Nome, Alaska

October 14, 2015

Effective Date: 12:01 a.m.
October 15, 2015

Expiration Date: June 30, 2016

EXPLANATION:

This Emergency Order opens State of Alaska resident hunting for musk oxen that are stranded on free-floating ice floes completely surrounded by salt water in Unit 18. The area affected by this announcement includes coastal marine waters adjacent to muskox populations located on Nunivak and Nelson islands in Unit 18. Residents taking musk oxen from ice floes must meet the requirements of *5 AAC 92.046 Permits for taking incidental or stranded musk oxen*. During the winter season, musk oxen may naturally move from terrestrial island habitat to nearby sea ice and incidentally become stranded when marine conditions cause ice movements and floes to develop before musk oxen can reach safety. Opening hunting under these specific conditions allows harvest opportunity of animals likely to be lost by drowning. All other muskox hunting regulations in Unit 18 remain unchanged by this emergency order.

REGULATION:

Therefore, the following regulations in **5 AAC 85.050 (a) (1) HUNTING SEASONS AND BAG LIMITS FOR MUSK OXEN** are superseded by this emergency order using hunt conditions required in **5 AAC 92.046. PERMITS FOR TAKING INCIDENTAL OR STRANDED MUSK OXEN**, as follows:

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
(1) ...		
Unit 18		
Up to 2 muskox per person; provided: musk oxen are stranded on free-floating ice floes completely surrounded by salt water; the hunter must	Oct 15-June 30	No open season

demonstrate the ice floe conditions by submitting photographic evidence to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game within 48 hours of harvest

...

All other musk oxen hunting regulations in Unit 18 remain unchanged by this emergency order.

Sam Cotten
Commissioner

By delegation to: 
Patrick Jones
Assistant Area Biologist

JUSTIFICATION:

At the March 2015 Board of Game meeting in Anchorage the regulations for 5 AAC 92.046. *Permits for taking incidental or stranded musk oxen* were modified, effective July 1, 2015, to allow the Commissioner to authorize the harvest of musk oxen stranded on ice floes by emergency order announcement. The requirements for harvest under ice floe conditions include:

- 1) Season opening by emergency order in Game Management Unit 18;
- 2) Musk oxen are stranded on free-floating ice floes completely surrounded by salt water;
- 3) A resident may harvest the stranded musk oxen without a permit;
- 4) Resident tag is waived (e.g. no tag required);
- 5) Bag limit of up to 2 musk oxen per person;
- 6) The hunter must demonstrate the ice floe conditions by submitting photographic evidence to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game within 48 hours of harvest.

Survey results show that the Nunivak and Nelson Island muskox population are above management objectives. Surveys completed in June 2015 revealed a Nunivak Island population of 740 muskoxen, a level above the management objective of 500–550 musk oxen, and a Nelson Island minimum population count of 944 musk oxen, also above the management objective of 250–450 musk oxen. Maximized permit hunting has been implemented by the department to reduce populations to management objectives over a multi-year period. At present, populations can sustain the additional harvest of stranded musk oxen.

For unknown reasons during winter, musk oxen occasionally wander onto sea ice adjacent to their terrestrial habitat. When ice floe conditions occur musk oxen may become incidentally

stranded and lack sources of fresh water or food needed for survival. Capturing and relocating stranded animals under these conditions would be very costly and extremely difficult logistically. High population status on both islands makes non-lethal relocation of stranded musk oxen back to either island inadvisable based on potential population impacts to range quality. Providing harvest opportunity of stranded musk oxen enables a prudent course of action for animals likely to be lost by drowning.

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Unit 18:

Association of Village Council Presidents

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Andreafsky

Aniak

Atmautluak

Bethel

Chefornak

Eek

Emmonak

Goodnews Bay

Hooper Bay

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Kalskag, Upper

Kasigluk

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Kotlik

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