

Chairman, Board of Game; February 13, 2008

The following comments give a brief description of the position that the Division of Alaska Wildlife Troopers (AWT) have on the proposals that are up for consideration at the March 2008 Alaska Board of Game meeting in Fairbanks.

Generally when the Board considers seasons and or bag limit changes, the Division of Alaska Wildlife Troopers requests that every effort possible be made to align the season dates and bag limits with adjacent game management units or sub units.

In General when the Board considers the creation of new hunts, additions of a controlled use or management area, or a more complex regulation scheme such as hunting corridors and split seasons, The Alaska Wildlife Troopers strongly request the Board to recognize the fact that the division has limited resources and man power. Any new hunt, closed area corridors or controlled use area restriction may not be adequately enforced.

The Alaska Wildlife Troopers will give detailed explanations as to the reasons that the division opposes or favors a particular proposal during the deliberation process.

Please contact me at (907) 451-5160 if there are any questions.

Thank you.

Dave Lorring,
Alaska Department of Public Safety, Division of Alaska Wildlife Troopers.

Proposal Analysis:

PROPOSAL #3: 5AAC 85.015, Hunting seasons and bag limits for black bear.

Include black bear hunting within the one mile radius brown bear hunting closure around the mouth of Wolverine creek in GMU 169B).

Alaska Wildlife Troopers Support this proposal. The Department of Public Safety played an integral role in the establishment of the brown bear hunting closure around the mouth of wolverine creek. At the time of the deliberations, there was very little if any testimony about conflicts between user groups as they related to black bears. AWT feels that it would be a very good move to close the land adjacent to wolverine creek to all bear hunting to alleviate conflicts between user groups.

PROPOSAL #8: 5AAC 8492.270 furbearer trapping, 5AAC 92.085(6) Unlawful methods of taking big game, & 5AAC 92.990(21) definitions. Establish a trapping season for black bears in GMU 19.

Alaska Wildlife Troopers are opposed to this proposal. Under the general trapping provisions, black bear would need a dual classification as both a furbearer and a big game animal. The use of traps or snares to take black bears could not target a specific sex or age class of bear. Trapping generally could not discriminate between species of bear (black vs. brown) or for that matter between bears and other predators such as wolf, wolverine or coyote. The period during which black bear trapping could occur would be during a closed season for other furbearers. The value of a black bear hide if sold as a fur is minimal. Compared to the amount of potential damage caused by implementing a black bear trapping program, the small increase of black bear take is negligible. Unless a predation control program is instituted with a tightly controlled permit procedure that allows the take of any black regardless of sex or age, and takes into consideration the loss of incidentally caught species, AWT is opposed to this approach.

PROPOSAL #12: 5AAC 85.045. Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose. Modify the season dates and antler restrictions for moose in unit 19B.

Alaska Wildlife Troopers find this proposal problematic in that there is no definition for a “subsistence hunter”. Hunts are designated as tier-2, registration, drawing, and general. Specific user groups are allowed to participate in these hunts based on the criteria established for each type of hunt. AWT would suggest to the board that if it wants to give additional opportunity to a specific user group, that it designate a hunt type and season length that reaches its goal.

PROPOSAL #13: 5AAC 85.045. Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose. Close the Holitna-Hoholitna Controlled Use Area to moose hunting in Unit 19A as follows.

Alaska Wildlife Troopers support this proposal. The Board has closed a portion of unit 19A within the controlled use area river corridor to moose hunting due to low population numbers. Wildlife troopers testified to the board during its 2006 meeting that enforcement of this closed area would be difficult. During the first hunting season since the closure, local residents have come to troopers with reports of several alleged violations of moose being taken in the closed area and being claimed as taken from an open area up river. If the department and the board feel that a closure in unit 19B adjacent

to and up river from the current 19A closure is warranted, this closure would aid enforcement efforts throughout the entire region. Hunters would not be able to hunt in 19A and claim that the animals were taken in 19B up river since this area would be closed also.

PROPOSAL #20 & 42: 5AAC 92.085. Unlawful methods of taking big game, exceptions. Allow the taking of adult grizzly bears over bait stations. **Alaska Wildlife Troopers are opposed to this proposal.** AWT would only support this type of proposal if it were part of a designated predator control program with individually permitted hunters. Prior attempts at hunting brown bears over bait stations have proved unsuccessful at increasing the harvest to any degree that would benefit ungulate populations. Brown bears do not readily come to bait stations and when they do, could cause a danger to hunters approaching and leaving their bait stations.

PROPOSAL #26: 5AAC 85.045. Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose. Modify the antler restrictions for 20A as follows. Define a legal bull as one having spike-fork or 36" antlers.

Alaska wildlife Troopers find that enforcement of this proposal would be problematic. This type of antler restriction allowing a moose with 36" antlers to be legal is completely different from an "any bull" bag limit or a 50" antler bag limit that occurs in adjacent units and the remainder of the state. Hunters would have to learn how to judge a 36' antler spread and there would be illegal bulls taken inadvertently the first few years of the hunt with this new bag limit. Unscrupulous hunters could easily take a moose with a 36" spread from an adjacent area and claim that it came from unit 20A. This proposal adds a measure of complication the regulations.

PROPOSAL #43: 5AAC 92.085. Unlawful methods of taking big game; exceptions. Establish access restrictions in Unit 20A. Prohibit hunting until after 3:00am following the day that a hunter has been transported in an airboat more than ¼ mile outside of a navigable water way. **Alaska Wildlife Troopers are opposed to this proposal.** Enforcement of this proposed language would be difficult at best. Trying to define a navigable water way that is located off of an established river corridor and then determine a ¼ mile corridor from that location would be confusing at best. Hunters would find themselves in violation of the regulation with no intent on their part. Airboats would have to be identified with large numbers similar to the system that is employed in Unit 6.

PROPOSAL #44: 5AAC 92.085. Unlawful methods of taking big game, exceptions. From August 1 through September 30, you may not hunt big game or assist someone in taking big game until 3:00AM of the day following the day in which you have been transported in a motorized land vehicle off of an established trail above the mean high water mark of any stream.

Alaska Wildlife Troopers find that enforcement of this proposal would be problematic. There would have to be a register or official list of established trails published for the state. A hunter could legally shoot a big game animal standing in the uplands the same day that he rides a motorized land vehicle if he is riding along a gravel bar below the high water mark of any stream. This same animal would become illegal if

the vehicle would then travel over the bank and stop above the high water mark when it was shot. The only way that this concept might possibly be enforceable would be to prohibit the use of a motorized land vehicle to hunt from, or to transport hunters, big game, or hunting gear from 3:00am following the day they hunted until after 3:00am of the day following the day the animal was killed. This type of requirement might not be realistic for the ATV riding public.

PROPOSAL #49& 50& 59: 5AAC 85.045. Seasons and bag limits for moose. Establish a winter moose season in Unit 21B and 24B, C, & D as follows. Establish a fall and winter moose hunts..... On native lands. **Alaska Wildlife Troopers have concerns with this proposal.** A map and a physical description would have to be provided for native lands. Due to the nature of straight line boundaries that follow township and section lines, locating the open and closed areas in the field would be complicated for both hunters and enforcement personnel. Hunters would find themselves inadvertently in violation by crossing into or outside of an open or closed area that has no physical boundary descriptions.

PROPOSAL #75: 5AAC 84.270 Furbearer trapping, 92.085(6), Unlawful methods of taking furbearers; exceptions, 92.990(21) definitions. Allow black bear trapping in units 21&24. **Alaska Wildlife Troopers are opposed to this proposal.** Under the general trapping provisions, black bear would need a dual classification as both a furbearer and a big game animal. The use of traps or snares to take black bears could not target a specific sex or age class of bear. Trapping generally could not discriminate between species of bear (black vs. brown) or for that matter between bears and other predators such as wolf, wolverine or coyote. The period during which black bear trapping could occur would be during a closed season for other furbearers. The value of a black bear hide if sold as a fur is minimal. Compared to the amount of potential damage caused by implementing a black bear trapping program, the small increase of black bear take is negligible. Unless a predation control program is instituted with a tightly controlled permit procedure that allows the take of any black regardless of sex or age, and takes into consideration the loss of incidentally caught species, AWT is opposed to this approach.

PROPOSAL #83: 5AAC 92.044. Permit for hunting black bears with the use of bait or sent lures, and 5AAC 92.085, Unlawful methods of taking big game, exceptions. Alaska Wildlife Troopers have concerns with this proposal. Under current bear baiting regulations, there are many requirements set into place that deal with education and safety. Allowing sent lures to be used for taking black bears especially along river corridors could place the hunter close to cabins roads etc. Does the board want to keep restrictions in place dealing with registration, required training (clinics), receiving remuneration from the hunter, or does the Board want to separate this activity out from a baiting activity and its associated restrictions? This method of hunting/baiting would be an effective way to take black bears. There would be no bait and accompanying containers brought into the field, no mess to clean up, and a very small and small foot print both geographically and spatially left in the field by the hunter. The time frame would be hours instead of days or weeks as is

common with traditional baiting. Bears that would not otherwise be exposed to hunters would be taken using this method.