



ADF&G • Boards Support Section

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Questions and Answers about Proposed Changes to the Alaska Board of Game Meeting Cycle

November 2014

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) is encouraging the Board of Game (board) to consider changing its meeting cycle from two to three years in an effort to reduce state spending, and address workload and public process issues. The board will review written comments from the advisory committees and public at the Work Session scheduled for January 2015 in Juneau before making a decision.

The following information is presented in a question and answer format. Comments from the public on the potential change are welcome and will benefit ADF&G and the board as they work through this process.

For additional information, please contact:

Kristy Tibbles, Executive Director, Alaska Board of Game (465-4110)

Q: Where is the board in the decision making process?

A: During the 2014/2015 meeting cycle, ADF&G asked the board to consider having a three year meeting cycle. The board requested ADF&G solicit public and advisory committee comments for review at the board Work Session scheduled for January 8, 2015 in Juneau.

Q: What are the benefits of having a three-year meeting cycle?

A: ADF&G sees a number of benefits associated with a three-year cycle:

1. A three-year meeting cycle will result in substantial cost savings for ADF&G and other agencies with the State of Alaska. It is estimated moving to a three-year cycle will prompt a reduction of five meeting days annually. At an estimated cost of \$8-10,000/day for Boards Support Section, this will allow greater funding for other board-related functions.
2. It allows for more efficient use of staff resources and alleviates heavy workloads, not only for ADF&G staff but also for the advisory committees, especially during years when both the boards of Game and Fisheries address the same regions.
3. A three-year cycle will provide longer timeframes for ADF&G to evaluate regulatory changes on wildlife populations and give the department the ability to manage species with a management plan system over a longer time period.

Q: Why is ADF&G concerned about the cost savings with moving to a three year cycle?

A: Given the state's shortfall in revenues, eight of 15 state agencies received a reduction in general funds for the 2014/2015 fiscal year. ADF&G's was one, receiving \$2.4 million less in undesignated general funds. Boards Support absorbed \$160K of this loss which will impact all board functions, including the advisory committees. Absorptions by other ADF&G divisions resulted in program reductions and eliminations. Continued budget reductions are expected for the future and ADF&G projects it will impact the ability of the Divisions of Wildlife Conservation and Subsistence to maintain the current level of participation at the board meetings. ADF&G supports a three year meeting cycle as a process change that will be more efficient, allow ADF&G to better deal with significant budget reductions, and has the least amount of impact for public participation in the regulatory process.

ADF&G considered other solutions to the budget shortfall to be more problematic than a 3-year cycle which is the standard for the Board of Fisheries. The alternative budget solutions include steps to reduce or cull proposals, reduced time for public testimony, reduced number of advisory committee meetings and travel budgets, reduced board support staff time, and reduced attendance at board meetings for regional area and wildlife staff. ADF&G does not wish to see these alternate budget solutions implemented because they negatively affect the public process and reduce the ability of the department to support that process.

Q: What will be the cost savings resulting from the change to a three-year cycle?

A: The cost savings will be significant for ADF&G. An estimated savings of nearly \$50,000 is related to the elimination of one five-day board meeting which includes meeting costs and travel expenses for board members, AC members, and Boards Support staff. This does not reflect the savings in ADFG staff effort, time, and travel for board and advisory committee meeting preparation and attendance. Allowing this major investment of personnel resources to occur every third year, similar to the fisheries staff, would shift the workload to address core research and management responsibilities for monitoring wildlife populations

Q: How will the change affect the advisory committees?

A: A three-year cycle will reduce the number of Board of Game issues to be addressed each year and eliminate regional overlap between the Board of Fisheries and the Board of Game meeting cycles. This will be helpful for advisory committees, especially for those that have limited number of meetings, by reducing the number of proposals considered each year.

Q: Would a three-year cycle allow enough responsiveness to public concerns and allow the board to respond to rapidly changing resource issues?

A: Yes. The use of agenda change requests and board generated proposals allows the board to respond outside of the current meeting cycle. Moreover, ADF&G always has the authority to address conservation concerns. A three-year cycle would result in longer timeframes for evaluating regulatory changes on wildlife populations and give the department the ability to manage species with a management plan system over a longer time period.

Q: How would a three-year cycle for the Board of Game mesh with the three-year cycle for the Board of Fisheries?

A: Quite well if implemented correctly to avoid overlap in major regional meetings. For example, Southcentral game topics could easily be scheduled to avoid years when the Board of Fisheries is scheduled to address Cook Inlet fishery topics. Currently with the two-year game cycle and three-year fisheries cycle, every other year results in a “double whammy” of board meetings causing heavy workloads and increased participation at board meetings for the local fish and game advisory committees. This meeting cycle (2014/15) the Southeast Region is taking on both game and fish issues. It is also difficult for department staff to cover both meetings, particularly in the Division of Subsistence.

Q: What would a transition period look like?

A: The department recommends dividing the board’s workload into the following groups:

- Central/Southwest (Region IV) and Statewide Regulations
- Interior (Region III) and Arctic/Western (Region V)
- Southeast (Region I) and Southcentral (Region II)

If the board approves the change, the transition will begin during the 2015/2016 meeting cycle with a Statewide regulations meeting, followed by the Arctic/Western and Interior Regions scheduled for the 2016/2017 meeting cycle, and the Central/Southwest Region and Statewide Regulations in 2017/2018. The transition to the three year cycle will be complete by scheduling the Southeast and Southcentral Regions in the 2018/2019 meeting cycle. This transition avoids overlap with the Board of Fisheries schedule. However, by doing so, there will be a four year waiting period for the Southcentral and Southeast Regions until the transition is complete. For that time period, ADF&G will work with the board to utilize the Agenda Change Request process to address issues needing attention.

Transition Period for the Board of Game Schedule

2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021
Statewide Regs.	Arctic/Western & Interior	Central/Southwest & Statewide Regs.	Southcentral & Southeast	Arctic/Western & Interior	Central/Southwest & Statewide Regs.

Q: Does the board have to take regulatory action to implement these changes?

A: No, the board schedule is at the discretion of the board and not a regulatory action.

Q: What is the role of the advisory committees and the public in commenting on these ideas?

A: Board actions are always informed by public input. The board is scheduled to decide the cycle change at the Work Session in January 2015. Comments by the public and advisory committees will provide the board with valuable information for making a decision.

Q: Where can I find more information?

A: Staff from the Division of Wildlife Conservation, Division of Subsistence, and the Boards Support Section is aware of these potential changes to the Board of Game's public input process. Also, more information will be available on the Board of Game website at www.boardofgame.adfg.alaska.gov
Please feel free to contact: Kristy Tibbles, Executive Director, Alaska Board of Game (465-4110)

COMPARISON OF CURRENT TWO-YEAR CYCLE¹ AND PROPOSED THREE-YEAR CYCLE

Cycle year	Current Board of Game two-year cycle	Proposed Board of Game three-year cycle
2014/2015	Southeast (Region I) Central/Southwest (Region IV) Southcentral/Southwest (Region II)	
2015/2016 <i>(Transition Begins)</i>	Arctic/Western (Region V) Statewide - B list (Chapter 92) Interior (Region III)	Statewide Regulations¹
2016/2017	Southeast (Region I) Central/Southwest (Region IV) Southcentral/Southwest (Region II)	Arctic/Western (Region V) Interior (Region III)
2017/2018	Arctic/Western (Region V) Statewide - A list (Chapter 92) Interior (Region III)	Central/Southwest (Region IV) Statewide Regulations*
2018/2019	Southeast (Region I) Southcentral/Southwest (Region II)	Southcentral Region (Region II) Southeast (Region I)
2019/2020	Arctic/Western (Region V) Statewide - B list (Chapter 92) Interior (Region III)	Arctic/Western (Region V) Interior (Region III)
2020/2021	Southeast (Region I) Southcentral/Southwest (Region II)	Central/Southwest (Region IV) Statewide Regulations*
2021/2022	Arctic/Western (Region V) Statewide - B list (Chapter 92) Interior (Region III)	Southcentral Region (Region II) Southeast (Region I)

¹ Statewide topics are currently on a four-year cycle. The board will need to decide to consider statewide topics on a three or six year schedule.