EXPLANATION:

The Board of Game adopted framework bag limits for ptarmigan in Game Management Units 12, 20, and 25C and delegated authority to the department to adjust bag limits within this framework based on population trends. This emergency order adjusts bag limits for regulatory year 2014–2015. In addition to this emergency order, adjusted bag limits are printed in the 2014–2015 Hunting Regulation Book No. 55.

REGULATION:

Therefore, the following regulations in 5 AAC 85.065(a)(3), HUNTING SEASONS AND BAG LIMITS FOR SMALL GAME, are superseded by this emergency order, and the following provisions are effective for hunting ptarmigan:
Emergency Order No. 03-04-14

June 27, 2014

Resident
Open Season
(Subsistence and General Hunts)

Nonresident
Open Season

Units and Bag Limits

(3)
Ptarmigan (rock, willow, and white-tailed)

Units 12, 20, and 25(C)

20 per day, 40 in possession
Aug. 10-Feb 28
(General hunt only)

5 per day, 10 in possession
Mar. 1–Apr. 30
(General hunt only)

All other ptarmigan hunting regulations remain unchanged and are not affected by this emergency order.

Cora Campbell
Commissioner

By delegation to:
Doreen Parker McNeill
Management Coordinator

JUSTIFICATION:

In Interior Alaska, ptarmigan populations exhibit large fluctuations in abundance. Adverse weather or high predator numbers during a few years can reduce chick production and overwinter survival, resulting in rapid and substantial declines. However, if environmental conditions are favorable, ptarmigan can respond quickly and become plentiful.

Harvest impacts ptarmigan in various ways. To ensure adequate protection to the population and to optimize hunter opportunity, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game must take into account population status and trend, harvest amount and timing, and trend of other mortality factors. Studies conducted in Alaska and western Canada indicate harvest has little impact when populations are high. However, when populations are low, harvest can have significant effects especially in late winter after most other sources of mortality have declined or if resident breeding birds are taken. Managing ptarmigan seasons and bag limits based on population trends
allows both the greatest hunting opportunity during population highs and adequate protection when there are few birds.

Based on survey data and hunter observations from the Interior road system, ptarmigan populations peaked in the mid to late 1990s, subsequently declined, and still have not fully recovered. Therefore, the bag limit during the spring portion of the hunting season has been restricted as indicated above.

**DISTRIBUTION:**
The distribution of this Emergency Order is to the following list. Copies are available from the Department of Fish and Game office in Fairbanks.

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   a. Director
   b. Deputy Director
   c. Regional Supervisors
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6. State/Federal Regulations Coordinator
   a. Anchorage
   b. Anchorage (Federal)
7. Division of Subsistence
   a. Fairbanks
   b. HQ
8. Legislative Liaison
9. Division of Boards
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   b. Boards Coordinator, Fairbanks
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10. ADF&G Public Communication Section
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14. Federal Office of Subsistence Management
15. Wrangell-St. Elias National Park
16. Yukon-Charley National Preserve
17. Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge
18. US Bureau of Land Management
    a. Anchorage
    b. Fairbanks
19. Tanana Chiefs Conference
20. Ahtna
21. Council of Athabaskan Tribal Governments
22. Dot Lake Village Council
23. Northway Village Council
24. Tetlin IRA Council
25. Gold Country Services
26. Eagle Trading Post