



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

1011 E. Tudor Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199

IN REPLY REFER TO:

FWS/OSM 11012/CA

FEB 24 2011

Mr. Cliff Judkins, Chair
Alaska Board of Game
P.O. Box 115526
Juneau, Alaska 99811-5526

Dear Chairman Judkins:

The Alaska Board of Game is scheduled to meet March 4-10, 2011, to deliberate proposals concerning changes to regulations governing hunting and trapping of wildlife for the Central and Southwest Regions. We have reviewed all of the proposals the Board will be considering at this meeting.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Subsistence Management, working with other Federal agencies, has developed preliminary recommendations on those proposals that have potential impacts on both Federal Subsistence users and wildlife resources. Our comments are enclosed.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on these important regulatory matters and look forward to working with your Board and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game on these issues. Please contact Chuck Ardizzone, Wildlife Liaison, 907-786-3871, with any questions you may have concerning this material.

Sincerely,

Peter J. Probasco,
Assistant Regional Director

Enclosure

cc: Cora Campbell, ADF&G
Tim Towarak, Chair, FSB
Kristy Tibbles, Board Support Section
Jennifer Yuhas, ADF&G
Interagency Staff Committee
Chuck Ardizzone, OSM





RECOMMENDATIONS

ALASKA BOARD OF GAME PROPOSALS

Central/Southwest Region

March 4-10, 2011

Wasilla, Alaska

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Subsistence Management (OSM)



PROPOSAL 8 - 5 AAC 85.025. Hunting seasons and bag limits for caribou.
Establish a resident only registration hunt for Southern Alaska Peninsula Caribou.

Current Federal Regulation:

Caribou - Unit 9D

No Federal open season.

Federal public lands are closed to the harvest of caribou.

Is a similar issue being addressed by the Federal Subsistence Board? No

Impact to Federal subsistence users/wildlife: Establishing a resident only registration permit would allow Federally qualified subsistence users to harvest caribou on State land using a State registration permit hunt. However, the Southern Alaska Peninsula Caribou Herd (SAP) is recovering from a population low and any harvest at this time could slow recovery efforts.

Federal Position /Recommended Action: The OSM recommendation is to **oppose** the proposal.

Rationale: Based on the most recent composition survey conducted by ADF&G in October 2010, the observed calf:cow ratio (46.6 calves:100 cows) and bull:cow ratio (27.9 bulls:100 cows) demonstrate a clear improvement in calf survival and recruitment in the SAP. However the bull:cow ratio is still below the management objective of >35 bulls:100 cows and the population level is low. According to the Southern Alaska Peninsula Caribou Operational Plan, hunting restrictions will be implemented during periods of population decline or when population parameters fall below established thresholds. Currently it would be premature to establish a registration permit hunt.

PROPOSAL 14 - 5 AAC 85.045. Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose Establish a registration hunt for moose in Unit 9.

Current Federal Regulation:

Moose – Unit 9

Unit 9A—1 bull *Sept. 1–Sept. 15*

Unit 9B—1 bull *Aug. 20–Sept. 15*
Dec. 1–Jan. 15



Is a similar issue being addressed by the Federal Subsistence Board? No

Impact to Federal subsistence users/wildlife: Extending the season an additional 5 days for both residents and nonresidents would likely increase the harvest of moose. The additional days would provide subsistence users additional opportunity to harvest a moose under State regulations.

Federal Position /Recommended Action: The OSM recommendation is **oppose** the proposal.

Rationale: Federally qualified subsistence users in Unit 9 feel that competition for the resource is a problem in Unit 9 and are frustrated due to the varied land status in the area. This is the reason Federal Subsistence Board endorsed the formation of the Unit 9 moose working group. The issues in the region were discussed and the work group submitted **Proposal 14** to the Board of Game. The work group felt implementation of a moose registration permit would allow better harvest tracking and allow harvest to be redirected to areas away from the villages to reduce user conflicts. Extending the moose season at this time, in Units 9C and 9E, especially for nonresident hunters, will only further exacerbate the perceived user conflict issues in the area unless other measures are taken.

PROPOSAL 24 - 5 AAC 92.010. Harvest tickets and reports. Delete the requirement for black bear harvest tickets in Game Management Unit 17.

Current Federal Regulation:

§ 100.6 Licenses, permits, harvest tickets, tags, and reports.

(a)(3) Possess and comply with the provisions of any pertinent permits, harvest tickets, or tags required by the State unless any of these documents or individual provisions in them are superseded by the requirements in subpart D of this part.

§ .26 Subsistence taking of wildlife.

(j) Sealing of bear skins and skulls.

(1) Sealing requirements for bear apply to brown bears taken in all Units, except as specified in this paragraph, and black bears of all color phases taken in Units 1–7, 11–17, and 20

Is a similar issue being addressed by the Federal Subsistence Board? No

Impact to Federal subsistence users/wildlife: Eliminating the harvest ticket requirement for black bears would eliminate the need for Federally qualified subsistence users to report their black bear harvest via a State harvest ticket. There should be no change in the harvest of black bear if the harvest ticket requirement is deleted.



Federal Position /Recommended Action: The Office of Subsistence Management recommendation is to **support** the proposal.

Rationale: ADF&G states that black bear harvest in Unit 17 have been low and there are no known conservation concerns for the resource. If harvest tickets are eliminated, harvest information will still be available as black bears taken in the unit must be sealed within 30 days of kill under both State and Federal regulations. Therefore harvest levels can be monitored to prevent any conservation concerns for the resource.

PROPOSAL 31- 5 AAC 85.025. Hunting seasons and bag limits for caribou. Open a nonresident drawing hunt for caribou in Unit 17.

Current Federal Regulation:

Unit 17 - Caribou

Unit 17A, all drainages west of Right Hand Point—2 caribou; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull, and no more than 1 caribou may be taken Aug. 1–Jan. 31.

*Aug. 1–Mar. 31
The season may be closed for the drainages between the Togiak River and Right Hand Point by announcement of the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Manager.*

The harvest limit may be reduced for the drainages between the Togiak River and Right Hand Point by announcement of the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Manager.

Units 17A and 17C, that portion of 17A and 17C consisting of the Nushagak Peninsula south of the Igushik River, Tuklung River and Tuklung Hills, west to Tvativak Bay—Up to 2 caribou by Federal registration permit.

*Aug. 1–Sept. 30
Dec. 1–Mar. 31
The season may be closed by announcement of the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Manager.*

Federal public lands are closed to the harvest of caribou except by the residents of Togiak, Twin Hills, Manokotak, Aleknagik, Dillingham, Clark’s Point, and Ekuk.

The harvest objective, harvest limit, and the number of permits available will be announced by the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Manager after consultation with the ADF&G and the Nushagak Peninsula Caribou Planning Committee. Successful



hunters must report their harvest to the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge within hours after returning from the field.

Units 17A remainder and 17C remainder— Selected drainages, a harvest limit of up to 2 caribou will be determined at the time the season is announced.

Season to be announced by the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Manager between Aug. 1–Mar. 31.

The harvest limit and hunt area to be announced by the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Manager between Aug. 1–Mar. 31.

Units 17B and that portion of 17C east of the Wood River and Wood River Lakes—2 caribou; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull, and no more than 1 caribou may be taken Aug. 1–Jan. 31.

Aug. 1–Mar. 15

Is a similar issue being addressed by the Federal Subsistence Board? No

Impact to Federal subsistence users/wildlife: Although the proposal requests a small number of drawing permits for nonresidents there could still be adverse impacts on the herd. It is generally recognized that nonresident hunters primarily target large bulls from the herd. The herd currently has a low bull:cow ratio, and elimination of the nonresident caribou seasons within the Mulchatna Caribou Herd’s range was important for the conservation of this resource.

Federal Position /Recommended Action: The OSM recommendation is to **oppose** the proposal.

Rationale: In March 2009, the Alaska Board of Game eliminated nonresident harvest on the Mulchatna Caribou Herd due to the harvestable surplus being lower than the amount needed for subsistence. In May 2010 the Federal Subsistence Board adopted wildlife proposals WP10-51, -53 and -60, which shortened the season, and reduced the caribou harvest limit for Federally qualified subsistence users in a number of units (the Mulchatna Caribou herds range) based on conservation concerns.

The current estimated bull:cow ratio for the Mulchatna Caribou herd is 16.8 bulls;100 cows which is below the management objective of 35 bulls:100 cows and lower than the past several years. The estimated calf:cow ratio is 19.5 calves:100 cows and is also lower than the past several years. There is not a current estimate of the herd size, however the estimated harvestable surplus is fully allocated. Providing additional harvest opportunities at this time is not recommended as it could delay or prevent herd growth.



PROPOSAL 32- 5 AAC 85.025. Hunting seasons and bag limits for caribou. Open a nonresident registration hunt for caribou in Unit 17.

Current Federal Regulation:

Unit 17 - Caribou

Unit 17A, all drainages west of Right Hand Point—2 caribou; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull, and no more than 1 caribou may be taken Aug. 1–Jan. 31.

*Aug. 1–Mar. 31
The season may be closed for the drainages between the Togiak River and Right Hand Point by announcement of the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Manager.*

The harvest limit may be reduced for the drainages between the Togiak River and Right Hand Point by announcement of the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Manager.

Units 17A and 17C, that portion of 17A and 17C consisting of the Nushagak Peninsula south of the Igushik River, Tuklung River and Tuklung Hills, west to Tvativak Bay—Up to 2 caribou by Federal registration permit.

*Aug. 1–Sept. 30
Dec. 1–Mar. 31
The season may be closed by announcement of the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Manager.*

Federal public lands are closed to the harvest of caribou except by the residents of Togiak, Twin Hills, Manokotak, Aleknagik, Dillingham, Clark’s Point, and Ekuk.

The harvest objective, harvest limit, and the number of permits available will be announced by the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Manager after consultation with the ADF&G and the Nushagak Peninsula Caribou Planning Committee. Successful hunters must report their harvest to the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge within hours after returning from the field.

Units 17A remainder and 17C remainder—Selected drainages, a harvest limit of up to 2 caribou will be determined at the time the season is announced.

Season to be announced by the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Manager between Aug. 1–Mar. 31.

The harvest limit and hunt area to be announced by the Togiak National Wildlife



Refuge Manager between Aug. 1–Mar. 31.

Units 17B and that portion of 17C east of the Wood River and Wood River Lakes—2 caribou; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull, and no more than 1 caribou may be taken Aug. 1–Jan. 31. Aug. 1–Mar. 15

Is a similar issue being addressed by the Federal Subsistence Board? No

Impact to Federal subsistence users/wildlife: Although the proposal requests a small number of registration permits for nonresidents there could still be adverse impacts on the herd. It is generally recognized that nonresident hunters primarily target large bulls from the herd. The herd currently has a low bull:cow ratio, and elimination of the nonresident caribou seasons within the Mulchatna Caribou Herd’s range was important for the conservation of this resource.

Federal Position /Recommended Action: The OSM recommendation is to **oppose** the proposal.

Rationale: See rationale for Proposal 31.

PROPOSAL 34 -5 AAC 85.045 Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose. Establish a nonresident registration hunt in Togiak National Wildlife Refuge in Unit 17A

Current Federal Regulations:

Unit 17A – Moose

Unit 17A—1 bull by State registration permit. Aug. 25–Sept. 20

Unit 17A, that portion that includes the area east of the west shore of Nenevok Lake, east of the west bank of the Kemuk River, and east of the west bank of the Togiak River south from the confluence Togiak and Kemuk rivers—1 antlered bull by State registration permit. Up to a 14-day season during the period Dec. 1–Jan. 31 may be opened or closed by the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Manager after consultation with ADF&G and local users. Winter season to be announced

Is a similar issue being addressed by the Federal Subsistence Board? No



Impact to Federal subsistence users/wildlife: The moose population is currently growing and expanding its range in Unit 17A, which will allow additional harvest in the future. Allowing nonresident harvest at this time could slow this growth and adversely affect the availability of moose for Alaskan residents including Federally qualified subsistence users.

Federal Position /Recommended Action: The OSM recommendation is to **oppose** the proposal.

Rationale: The moose management plan for Unit 17A identifies a population level exceeding 1700 moose as the point to allow a fall nonresident opportunity to harvest bulls (Goal 3, Objective 7). The most recent population count in Unit 17A found a minimum of 1070 moose in 2008 (an increase from the minimum of 1023 moose counted in 2006) and it is still estimated to be below the 1700 moose trigger to allow nonresident harvest. Therefore a nonresident season is not warranted at this time.



PROPOSAL 109 - 5 AAC 92.015. Brown bear tag fee exemptions. Remove the brown bear tag fee revocation for certain lands in Units 11, 13, and 16B.

Current Federal Regulations:

§ 100.6 Licenses, permits, harvest tickets, tags, and reports.

(a) (3) Possess and comply with the provisions of any pertinent permits, harvest tickets, or tags required by the State unless any of these documents or individual provisions in them are superseded by the requirements in subpart D of this part.

Is a similar issue being addressed by the Federal Subsistence Board? No

Impact to Federal subsistence users/wildlife: There would be no affect on brown bears if this proposal was adopted, however there would be an increased cost for subsistence users harvesting a brown bear.

Federal Position /Recommended Action: The OSM recommendation is to **oppose** the proposal.

Rationale: There are no known conservation concerns for brown bears in Units 11, 13 and 16B. If this proposal is adopted fee restrictions would be lifted under State regulations, which would also result in Federally qualified subsistence users being required to purchase a \$25.00 resident tag to harvest a brown bear in the affected units.



PROPOSAL 110 - 5 AAC. 92.015 Brown bear tag fee exemption. Reauthorize the brown bear tag fees for Region IV.



Current Federal Regulations:

§ 100.6 Licenses, permits, harvest tickets, tags, and reports.

(a) (3) Possess and comply with the provisions of any pertinent permits, harvest tickets, or tags required by the State unless any of these documents or individual provisions in them are superseded by the requirements in subpart D of this part.

Is a similar issue being addressed by the Federal Subsistence Board? No

Impact to Federal subsistence users/wildlife: There would be no impact on brown bears if this proposal was adopted, however there would be an increased cost for subsistence users harvesting a brown bear if the tag fee exemptions are not reauthorized.

Federal Position /Recommended Action: The OSM recommendation is to **support** the proposal.

Rationale: There are no known conservation concerns for brown bears in the units affected by this proposal. If this proposal is adopted it would continue the tag fee exemption, which eliminates the requirement that subsistence users must purchase a \$25 tag before hunting brown bears.

PROPOSAL 202 – 5 AAC 92.015. Brown bear tag fee exemptions. Reauthorize resident grizzly bear tag fee exemptions throughout Interior and Eastern Arctic Alaska.

Current Federal Regulations:

§ 100.6 Licenses, permits, harvest tickets, tags, and reports.

(a) (3) Possess and comply with the provisions of any pertinent permits, harvest tickets, or tags required by the State unless any of these documents or individual provisions in them are superseded by the requirements in subpart D of this part.

Is a similar issue being addressed by the Federal Subsistence Board? No

Impact to Federal subsistence users/wildlife: There would be no impact on brown bears if this proposal was adopted, however there would be an increased cost for subsistence users harvesting a brown bear if the tag fee exemptions are not reauthorized.

Federal Position /Recommended Action: The OSM recommendation is to **support** the proposal.

Rationale: Currently there are no known conservation concerns for brown bears in Units 12, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26B and 26C. Tag fees appear to have little affect on harvest in these areas. If this proposal is adopted it would continue the tag fee exemption, which



eliminates the requirement that subsistence users must purchase a \$25 tag before hunting grizzly bears in Units 12, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26B and 26C. Retaining this tag fee exemption is particularly important in areas where there are few vendors and local economies are in a depressed state.

PROPOSAL 205 - 5 AAC 92.450. Description of Game Management Units. Modify the boundaries for Units 18, 19 and 21 as follows:

Create new boundary language for Unit 18 to read: That area draining into the Yukon River downstream from the ‘down river’ boundary of; and that area draining into the Kuskokwim River downstream from the ‘down river’ boundary of Dick Nash’s fish camp, on the South bank of the river and the ‘down river’ boundary of Sam Savage’s fish camp on the North side of the river (both located five miles downriver of Lower Kalskag); and that area draining into Crooked Creek (also know as Johnson River) downstream from the northern terminus of the Mud Creek to Crooked Creek (also know as Johnson River) tramway (also known as Mud Creek to Johnson River Portage).

Create new boundary language for Unit 19 to read: That area draining into the Kuskokwim River upstream from the ‘down river boundary of Dick Nash’s fish camp, on the South bank of the river and the ‘down river’ boundary of Sam Savage’s fish camp, on the North bank of the river; and that area draining into Crooked Creek (also known as Johnson River) upstream from the northern terminus of the Mud Creek to Crooked Creek (also known as Johnson River) tramway (also known as Mud Creek to Johnson River Portage).

Create new boundary language for Unit 21 to read: That area draining into the Yukon River upstream from the “down river” boundary of.

(Note: All of the above-mentioned land marks are well known to all hunters in Units 18, 19, and 21. They are also very easy to locate on “up-to-date” maps. It would also make it easier for the “map makers” to draw in the affected drainages.)

Current Federal Regulation:

Unit 18

Unit 18 consists of that area draining into the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers downstream from a straight line drawn between Lower Kalskag and Paimiut and the drainages flowing into the Bering Sea from Cape Newenham on the south to and including the Pastolik River drainage on the north; Nunivak, St. Matthew, and adjacent islands between Cape Newenham and the Pastolik River.



Unit 19

Unit 19 consists of the Kuskokwim River drainage upstream from a straight line drawn between Lower Kalskag and Piamiut:

Unit 21

Unit 21 consists of drainages into the Yukon River upstream from Paimiut to, but not including, the Tozitna River drainage on the north bank, and to, but not including, the Tanana River drainage on the south bank; and excluding the Koyukuk River drainage upstream from the Dulbi River drainage:

Is a similar issue being addressed by the Federal Subsistence Board? No.

Impact to Federal subsistence users/wildlife: The change in hunt area would redefine the boundaries for Unit 18, 19 and 21 under State regulations; however it would not change the hunt area boundaries under Federal regulations. This would require subsistence users to be aware of the differing boundaries under State and Federal regulations while hunting.

Federal Position /Recommended Action: The OSM recommendation is **neutral** on the proposal.

Rationale: If the Board adopts this proposal, the geographic descriptions for hunt areas for Units 18, 19 and 21 would differ between the State and Federal regulations. Federally qualified subsistence users would need to be aware of these differences while hunting to avoid any law enforcement issues. To change the geographic descriptions for the hunt area in Federal regulations it would take a proposal to the Federal Subsistence Board.

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**PROPOSAL 206 – 5 AAC 92.015(a) (8) & (9) and 92.015 (b) (4), (7), (8) & (10)**  
**Brown bear tag fee exemptions.** Reauthorize the current resident tag fee exemptions for brown bear in Units 18, 22, 23 and 26A.

**Current Federal Regulations:**

**§ 100.6 Licenses, permits, harvest tickets, tags, and reports.**

*(a) (3) Possess and comply with the provisions of any pertinent permits, harvest tickets, or tags required by the State unless any of these documents or individual provisions in them are superseded by the requirements in subpart D of this part.*

**Is a similar issue being addressed by the Federal Subsistence Board?** No



**Impact to Federal subsistence users/wildlife:** There would be no impact on brown bears if this proposal was adopted, however there would be an increased cost for subsistence users harvesting a brown bear if the tag fee exemptions are not reauthorized.

**Federal Position /Recommended Action:** The OSM recommendation is to **support** the proposal.

**Rationale:** Currently there are no known conservation concerns for brown bears in Units 18, 22, 23 and 26A. Tag fees appear to have little effect on harvest in these areas. If this proposal is adopted it would continue the tag fee exemption, which eliminates the requirement that subsistence users must purchase a \$25 tag before hunting grizzly bears in Units 18, 22, 23 and 26A. Retaining this tag fee exemption is particularly important in areas where there are few vendors and local economies are in a depressed state.

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**PROPOSAL 223 – 5 AAC 92.052. Discretionary permit hunt conditions and procedures.** Review the discretionary authority requiring the nullification of trophy value of animals taken under a subsistence permit.

**Current Federal Regulations:**

Currently there are no regulations requiring nullification of trophy value in Federal hunting regulations.

**Is a similar issue being addressed by the Federal Subsistence Board?** No

**Impact to Federal subsistence users/wildlife:** There should be no impact to wildlife. Discretionary authority requiring the nullification of trophy value of animals taken under a subsistence permit has been used in a number of game management units to help limit hunters who wish to harvest an animal for its trophy value. Removing this discretionary authority could lead to increased competition as well as user conflicts in several of the areas where nullification of trophy value is required. Federally qualified subsistence users may be impacted if the discretionary authority is removed.

**Federal Position /Recommended Action:** The OSM recognizes that it is important to review discretionary authorities periodically however OSM would be **opposed** to the removal of the discretionary authority to require the nullification of trophy value from the Department at this time.

**Rationale:** The nullification of trophy value of animals taken is a valuable tool allowing managers to limit harvest in areas without initiating alternative hunt management strategies such as Tier II permits or drawing hunts when a wildlife population cannot support harvest from all user groups. Removing this discretionary authority could lead to increased competition as well as user conflicts in several of the areas where nullification of trophy value is required. Additionally, this tool has been used as the foundation of



certain management plans (i.e. Koyukuk River Moose Management Plan) and if eliminated, could invalidate these joint planning efforts.