

RC 24

2011 BOG testimony

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My Name is Roger Skogen. I am a NAC board member, and am representing the village of Koliganek. Thank you for the opportunity to present my testimony before the board.

Predation by brown bears and wolves are decimating the moose population in upper Unit 17B. Both the brown bear and wolf populations are higher than locals have ever seen. Some measures have been taken by the state BOG to decrease this predation but the moose population continues to decline

The moose population in the upper part of Game Management Unit 17B, above Harris Creek, which is a remote wilderness area, is in a serious decline. This fall, in 2010, during the late hunting season and into the late rut both on the upper Nuyukuk River and upper Nushagak River above Harris Creek, the gravel bars and sloughs were nearly void of any moose sign. It was very rare, this fall, for anyone to see a calf with a cow. Generally about 1/4 to 1/3 of the fall moose harvest are young bulls, but to my knowledge, only one spike or fork bull was harvested by Koliganek residents in 2010 which is very unusual. This is a sign to me that the young moose are not surviving.

Another indicator is the early spring breakup moose count. Each year for the past 35 years I travel the Nushagak River, from Harris Creek to Chichitnok River, in the early spring right after breakup to go camping. Moose right after breakup, like to eat the willows along the river and are easy to count because of the lack of foliage. In years past I could easily count an average of one or more moose per river mile along that stretch of Nushagak River. For the spring of 2009, I counted six total moose and in 2010, I counted only four moose along the same stretch of river where 10 years ago I would count 50 to 70 moose.

The local residents are just not seeing the moose or their sign there anymore and are extremely concerned that this important traditional food resource, they depend upon, in upper Game Management Unit 17B will soon be gone if nothing is done. Efforts are being made, by local residents to decrease the wolf population, but the past two winters the snow conditions in that area have be too poor to be effective.

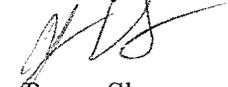
Local residents want to help in managing the rapidly increasing GMU 17B brown bear population that are killing moose and especially their calves but are hindered because of the closed summer season, tag expense, the bag limit of only one bear, and the cost of traveling to Dillingham (\$200) to get the hide sealed. In the summer months the bears pull up and destroy subsistence nets, however the brown bear season is closed at that time and it is illegal for local residents harvest them because net pulling is not considered "Defense of Life or Property". I ask The Board of Game to support Roger Skogen's proposals #28 (Change brown bear bag limit and other hunt conditions in 17B) to allow local residents to do their part in predator management of 17B and #27(predator control plan for brown bears in 17B). I also ask that the board support Chris Carr's proposal # 25 to allow non-resident hunters to harvest two brown bears per season.

The GMU 17B two mile restrictive corridor passed by the State BOG in 2005 has reduced the guide traffic on the upper Nushagak river as it was intended to do and should remain in place at all costs. Proposals #31 and #32 are an attempt by one big game guide to benefit his business in upper GMU 17B by opening caribou hunting to nonresidents within the corridor that has been closed to nonresident caribou hunting since 2005 by the BOG. This, at a time when the Mulchatna caribou herd population is at a critical low and the caribou bag limit has been cut to two caribou per local resident hunter.

Proposals #33, #35, and #37 are an attempt by the same big game guide to eliminate the original intent of the corridor altogether and open it wide open to nonresident moose hunters at a time when the moose population is at an all time low in upper 17B. These three proposals will only decimate the moose population further and make it harder for the moose to make a come-back. Instead, by adopting proposal #36 which will place a moratorium on nonresident moose hunting in GMU 17B, guide traffic on the along the river corridor will be reduced, and local hunters will have a better chance of getting some type of predator management in upper 17B with non-resident hunting put on hold.

The upper portion of the Nushagak River GMU 17B is also experiencing a decline in **beaver**. Houses that were alive and thriving just a couple of years ago are dead today. We are not sure why, but proposal #104 to extend the beaver season in 17B will only make it worse. The beaver fur in May is not a good quality because many of the beaver skins are bit up from fighting at that time of year.

Thank you



Roger Skogen