

Proposal 223: Discretionary Permit Hunt Conditions and Procedures: Trophy Nullification

This proposal requests review of the Department's discretionary authority to destroy the trophy value of animals taken under a subsistence permit.

It is a Board of Game proposal that affects subsistence musk ox hunts in Units 22 and 23:

- Seward Peninsula, Units 22 and 23 SW (Tier I)
- Unit 23, north of the Noatak River (Tier II)

Department Recommendation: **No recommendation.**

Regional advisory committee responses:

Retain department discretion; maintain status quo

- Unit 22: Northern Norton Sound AC
- Unit 22: Southern Norton Sound AC
- Unit 23: Kotzebue Sound AC
- Unit 26: North Slope AC

Proposal 223: Department Procedures

- ✓ The Department uses discretionary authority to destroy trophies under 5 AAC 92.052 (5).
- ✓ Applied to game populations with:
 - Positive C&T
 - High trophy value
 - Low harvestable surplus (quota-based hunts)
 - Liberal seasons for subsistence
 - Liberal bag limits (any bull)
 - No tag fee (\$500 fee exempted by Board)
 - Lower overall cost for subsistence hunting
- ✓ These factors have been applied to all subsistence musk ox hunts.
 - Trophy nullification was applied to the first subsistence hunts in Unit 26C (1986).
 - All subsistence hunts to date have had trophy destruction.
- ✓ Removing high-value trophy hunting in subsistence hunts is accomplished by trophy nullification.

Proposal 223: Seward Peninsula Muskox

- ✓ **Subsistence Hunts:** Currently in Units 22/23, musk ox horns are cut and retained by department to destroy trophy value of animals taken in subsistence hunts.
 - 1) No trophy use of horns was recognized in the 1997 Board record related to the positive C&T finding for Seward Peninsula muskox.
 - 2) \$500 resident tag fees exempted by Board; trophies are nullified to prevent trophy hunting for 'no tag fee'.
 - 3) Trophy destruction is used to discourage hunters seeking trophies from participating in subsistence hunts.
 - 4) Horn cutting is an effective management tool to control the number of hunters participating in quota-limited Tier I subsistence hunt.
 - 5) Provides maximum opportunity for users.
- ✓ **Drawing Hunts:**
 - 1) Trophy hunting for harvestable surplus above ANS.
 - 2) \$500 resident tag fee.

Units 22/23 - Muskox

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Proposal 223: Seward Peninsula – Regulatory Overview

Regulatory Overview:

- ✓ 1995 - The BOG made a negative C&T finding for Seward Peninsula Muskox.
- ✓ 1995 - The first proposals for hunting musk oxen on the Seward Peninsula were submitted to the BOG. The BOG authorized two non-subsistence (general season) hunts:
 - a registration hunt – up to 12 permits/year
 - a drawing hunt – up to 12 permits/year
- ✓ 1995 - Acting on a proposal from the Seward Peninsula RAC, the FSB allocated the entire harvestable surplus of Seward Peninsula muskox to federal hunts. As a consequence, no state hunts were opened.
- ✓ 1995, 1996, 1997 - Hunting by federal permit on federal public land was the only subsistence harvest.

Units 22/23 - Muskox

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Proposal 223: Seward Peninsula – Regulatory Overview

- ✓ 1997 – Customary and Traditional Determination.
 - The BOG revisited the C&T use of muskoxen for the Seward Peninsula.
 - Adopted a positive C&T finding using 8 criteria to identify subsistence use patterns.
 - Criteria 3: “the primary transportation is by snowmachine or foot without the use of aircraft or expensive commercial services”.
 - Criteria 5: “there has been no trophy use of horns and hides”.
- ✓ 1998 – Amount Necessary Determination (ANS)
 - BOG set the ANS at 100 muskox for subsistence.
 - State hunting began by Tier II permit.
 - Also, hunting by federal permit continued.
 - State and Federal management programs share harvest quotas and goals.

Units 22/23 - Muskox

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Proposal 223: Seward Peninsula – Regulatory Overview

- ✓ 2001 – The BOG identified 2 populations of muskox:
 - One part, consisting of the Seward Peninsula population, was fully utilized for subsistence.
 - The other part, mature bulls in Unit 22E, was not fully utilized for subsistence.
 - This carved out the mature bulls in Unit 22E as a separate population making them available for the first drawing permits in the Seward Peninsula population.
- ✓ 2002 – Drawing hunt begins in Unit 22E for under-utilized population of mature bulls. Also, subsistence hunting by Tier II permit.

Units 22/23 - Muskox

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Proposal 223: Seward Peninsula – Regulatory Overview

- ✓ 2005 – Nested ANS Determination in Unit 22E.
 - BOG created a nested ANS of 40-52 muskoxen.
 - The nested-ANS was part of the overall ANS of 100.
 - Mature bulls in Unit 22E in excess of ANS were available for non-subsistence hunting.
 - Begin Tier I registration hunt in Unit 22E in RY 2006.
 - Drawing hunt continues in Unit 22E.

- ✓ 2007 – BOG Revised ANS; Manage hunts by Tier I
 - Reviewed existing ANS of 100
 - Changed ANS to a range of 100 – 150
 - Retained nested ANS of 40 – 50 in Unit 22E.
 - Directed Department to begin subsistence hunts by Tier I registration permit for all hunts.
 - Tier I is open to all Alaska residents.
 - Added several drawing permit hunts.
 - No change to federal hunting by federal permit.

Units 22/23 - Muskox

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Proposal 223: Seward Peninsula – Muskox Population

- ✓ 2008 – The Seward Peninsula Muskox Cooperators met to help craft the current Seward Peninsula hunt regime
 - Combination of Tier I registration hunts for subsistence and Drawing permits for trophy muskox.
 - Most Tier I registration permits are available over the internet.
 - No restriction on the number of subsistence permits.

Unit 23, North of the Noatak River

- ✓ 1999 – Positive C&T finding
- ✓ 2001 – Begin Tier II hunt with horn cutting
- ✓ 2010 – Continued Tier II hunting; no changes

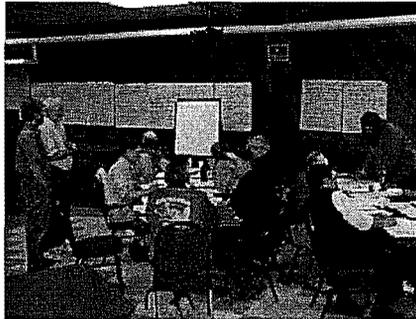
Units 22/23 - Muskox

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Proposal 223: Seward Peninsula Muskox Cooperators Group

Previous regulatory changes included input from the Seward Peninsula Muskox Cooperators Group:

- Formed in 1994; assisted by State & Federal agencies
- Stakeholders include: rural users, guides, visiting hunters, tourism; Board members present at meetings
- Cooperative Management Plan prepared in 1994
- Developed recommendations to BOG and FSB



Seward Peninsula Muskox Cooperators Meeting, Nome, 2006

Units 22/23 - Muskox

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Proposal 223: Seward Peninsula – Muskox Population

Population Management Overview:

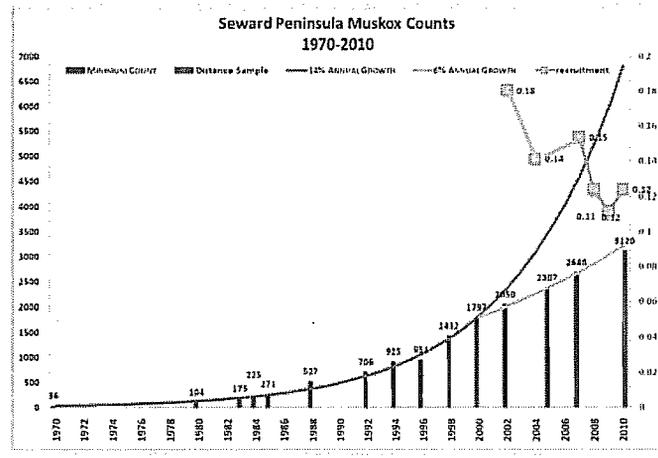
- ✓ In 1970, 36 muskoxen from Nunivak Island were introduced to the southwest portion of the Seward Peninsula.
- ✓ In 1981, an additional 35 muskoxen from Nunivak Island were trans-located to this same area.
- ✓ Since 1970, the population has grown steadily and expanded its range eastward to Game Management Units (GMU) 22, 23, and 24.
- ✓ The population grew 14% annually from 1970 to 2000 (first 30 years).
- ✓ The population grew 6% annually from 2000 and 2010 (last 10 years).

Units 22/23 - Muskox

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Proposal 223: Seward Peninsula – Muskox Population

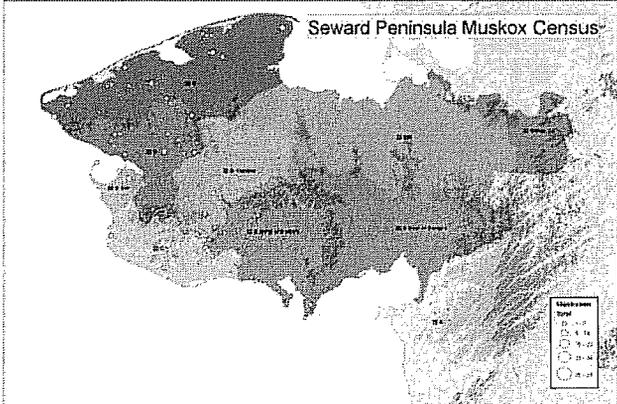
History of Population Growth 1970 - 2010



Units 22/23 - Muskox Proposal 223: Slide 11

Proposal 223: Seward Peninsula – Muskox Population

2010 Muskox Counts - Group Locations



Units 22/23 - Muskox Proposal 223: Slide 12

Proposal 223: Seward Peninsula – Muskox Population

Population Management Overview (continued):

- ✓ Interest in muskox management has increased and now includes local, statewide, and national interests.
- ✓ Interest in viewing and hunting muskoxen is high, and both subsistence and trophy hunting occurs on the Seward Peninsula. Hunting areas and season dates are set with consideration of world class muskox viewing opportunities along the Nome Road system.
- ✓ The department completes Seward Peninsula range-wide population counts every 2-3 years.
- ✓ The department completes 3-4 composition surveys annually in Seward Peninsula subunits.
- ✓ Radiotelemetry study initiated in 2008.

Units 22/23 - Muskox

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Proposal 223: Seward Peninsula – Muskox Population

Population Management Overview (continued):

Despite continued population growth, there are several 'red flags' related to the current status of the Seward Peninsula muskox population.

1. Calves:100 adults and recruitment rates have declined in Units 22B, 22C, 22D, and 23SW.
2. Mature Bull:Cow ratios have declined in Units 22B, 22C, and 23SW.
3. Since 2006 adult cow mortality has been 10%-24% annually.
4. Population structure is changing compared to early years of hunting.
5. Reduced harvest rates are anticipated in future.

Units 22/23 - Muskox

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Proposal 223: Seward Peninsula – Hunter Participation

Subsistence Registration Hunts (quota = ANS)
 265 permits – local Seward Peninsula
108 permits – non-local (visiting hunters)
 373 permits – total issued

Drawing Applications for Seward Peninsula hunts
 1926 – residents (applied in 2009 for 2010 hunts)
147 – nonresidents
 2073 – total applications
 10-year average drawing application rate: 1700/year

Current Seward Peninsula registration hunting allows:

- Greatest opportunity to the widest number of users
- 80% of registration permits are internet available

If no horn cutting:

- We anticipate a large number of drawing applicants to participate in subsistence registration hunt.
- Residents have over 1900 drawing applications; this is 5x greater than the number of registration permits issued.
- Significant changes to subsistence hunting opportunity may result in a federally dominated hunt.

Proposal 223: Seward Peninsula – Alternatives

Alternative Hunt Management - Basic Assumptions

- Maintain population size with appropriate harvest quotas
- Continue with current ANS of 100-150
- Alaska residents only
- No tag fee (unless proposed in alternative)
- No trophy destruction (unless described in alternative)

Types of Alternatives:

1. No change to registration permits
 - *Registration permit hunt with no limit on number of permits*
2. Change registration permit availability
 - *Limited number of registration permits issued on a first-come, first serve basis*
 - *Restricted or advance availability of registration permits.*

Proposal 223: Seward Peninsula – Alternatives

3. Change registration permit hunt conditions
 - *Create a Tier 1 registration permit for muskoxen that excludes the opportunity to hunt big game in other areas of Alaska*
 - *Registration permit hunt with a post-hunt "trophy fee" applied for taking a mature bull with a "boss" horn*
 - *Registration permit hunt with pre-hunt tag fee applied if horns not destroyed*
4. Change bag limit
 - *Limited number of registration permits for mature bulls with a "boss" horn; open registration permit for all other animals (small bulls and cows)*
 - *Exclude mature bulls with a "boss" horn from the bag limit associated with registration permits*
 - *Create a drawing permit hunt for all mature bulls with a "boss" horn; cows and small bulls would remain under an open registration permit system*

Proposal 223: Seward Peninsula – Alternatives

5. Change Amount Reasonably Necessary (ANS)
 - *Requires Board action to evaluate and change ANS in response to increased number of subsistence hunters.*
 - *If ANS is increased, hunts will very likely revert back to Tier II.*
 - *Harvest quotas may be met or achieved through limited availability of Tier II permits.*

Proposal 223: Seward Peninsula – Alternatives

Alternative 1: Registration permit hunt with no limit on number of permits

Action:

- No limit on number of subsistence permits issued.

Effect:

- Season will be closed by EO when the quota is reached.
- Accessible areas with small quotas will have very short seasons and "derby" style hunting conditions.
- Very difficult to avoid overharvest with a large number of hunters in the field.
- Hunters will hunt in what many consider to be an undesirable time of year (August and January).
- Hunting will occur regardless of dangerous weather conditions.

Units 22/23 - Muskox

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Proposal 223: Seward Peninsula – Alternatives

Alternative 2A: Limited number of registration permits issued on a first-come, first serve basis

Action:

- Department limits number of permits; designates time and location.

Effect:

- Longer season available for harvest.
- Village license vendors could not handle permit issuance problems.
- At existing staffing levels, Nome and Kotzebue could not handle permit issuance needs at villages.
- These types of hunts very unpopular with the public.
- Given the popularity of muskoxen hunts, we would expect extremely high public interest and unmanageable long lines of permit applicants.
- If long lines for permits, disputes by hunters may require Trooper presence.

Units 22/23 - Muskox

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Proposal 223: Seward Peninsula – Alternatives

Alternative 2B Restricted or advance availability of registration permits.

Action:

- Hunters required to obtain permits in advance of hunting season.

Effect:

- Hunters would make 2 trips to Seward Peninsula (first trip to get permit; second trip for hunting).
- Frustration among local hunters who miss the permit pick-up period.
- Frustration among non-local hunters who don't want expense of two trips.
- Difficult for village license vendors to administer.

Proposal 223: Seward Peninsula – Alternatives

Alternative 3A: Create a Tier 1 registration permit for muskoxen that excludes the opportunity to hunt big game in other areas of Alaska

Action:

- Permit hunt condition would exclude big game hunting in any other Game Management Unit.

Effect:

- Because most seasons for caribou and moose are closed in other areas of Alaska when muskoxen seasons are open, this scenario would not significantly reduce or depress hunter interest.
- Regulation would be difficult to enforce.
- Village license vendors could not be expected to verify who is eligible.

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Alternative 3B: Registration permit hunt with a post-hunt "trophy fee" applied for taking a mature bull with a "boss" horn

Action:

- Requires a statutory change to implement a new fee

Effect:

- Subsistence hunters not willing to pay 'trophy fee' would have less access to certain animals.
- Given the high popularity of muskoxen hunts, it will not likely reduce hunter interest.

Units 22/23 - Muskox

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Proposal 223: Seward Peninsula – Alternatives

Alternative 3C: Registration permit hunt with pre-hunt tag fee applied if horns not destroyed

Action:

- Requires a statutory change if the pre-hunt tag fee is higher than \$500

Effect:

- All other horns taken by subsistence hunters would need to be destroyed.
- Difficult to enforce throughout the hunt area.
- Staff would not be able to address horns taken by village hunters.
- Subsistence hunters might have less access to certain animals through competition from hunters paying pre-hunt fees.
- Given the high popularity of muskoxen hunts, it will not likely reduce hunter interest.

Units 22/23 - Muskox

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Proposal 223: Seward Peninsula – Alternatives

Alternative 4A: Limited registration permit hunt for mature bulls with a "boss" horn; open registration permit for all other animals (small bulls and cows)

Action:

- Develop separate permits for each bag limit.

Effect:

- Village license vendors could not handle permit issuance problems.
- At existing staffing levels, Nome and Kotzebue staff could not handle permit issuance needs at the villages.
- Subsistence hunters would have restricted access to certain animals.
- Given the popularity of muskoxen hunts, we would expect high public interest and long lines of permit applicants for the mature bull permits.

Proposal 223: Seward Peninsula – Alternatives

Alternative 4B: Exclude mature bulls with a "boss" horn from the legal registration hunt bag limit.

Action:

- Bag limit on permit does not include mature bulls.

Effect:

- Mature bull horns would be surrendered to the Department if inadvertently taken.
- Immediate effect would be to improve declining bull:cow ratios.
- Excludes a class of animals from use by subsistence hunters.
- Creates enforcement problem for hunters who take a mature bull.
- Uncertain effect of increased small bull or cow harvest.

Proposal 223: Seward Peninsula – Alternatives

Alternative 4C: Create a drawing permit hunt for all mature bulls with a "boss" horn; cows and small bulls would remain under an open registration permit system.

Action:

- Bag limit on registration permit excludes mature bulls.
- Bag limit on drawing permit is mature bulls.

Effect:

- Mature bull quotas would need to be defined as outside the ANS.
- Subsistence hunters would not have access to some muskoxen.
- Improves our ability to control the mature bull harvest and maintain adequate bull:cow ratios.
- Uncertain effect of increased small bull or cow harvest.

Units 22/23 - Muskox

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Proposal 223: Seward Peninsula – Alternatives

Alternative 5: Revert registration hunts to Tier II hunts

Action:

- Requires BOG action to modify current ANS.

Effect:

- Hunters would have entire season to hunt.
- Little risk of quotas being exceeded.
- Problematic for local hunters who have trouble navigating the application paperwork.
- Reduced opportunity for younger hunters and those from outside the area.

Units 22/23 - Muskox

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Seward Peninsula Subsistence Hunts (No Trophy Nullification)

<u>Alternative</u>	<u>Meets Goals¹</u>	<u>Positive Result of Action</u>	<u>Negative Result of Action</u>
Unlimited Registration Permits	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None; current management allows unlimited registration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High risk of overharvest² • Short seasons; EO closures • Derby style hunting is unpopular with some hunters
Change Registration Permit Availability	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower competition among hunters; • Longer seasons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unpopular with hunters • Severely reduces statewide hunter opportunity³ • Impossible to administer in villages; difficult to administer in Nome and Kotzebue
Change Registration Permit Conditions	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discourages participation (e.g. fees for mature bulls, pre-hunt tag fee if horns not destroyed, no hunting in other GMUs). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires changes to Statutes • Difficult to enforce • Ineffective at curbing high participation by hunters • Reduces hunting opportunity
Change Bag Limit	Med	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low pressure on mature bulls • Improved ability to manage bull:cow ratios; • Possible increased drawing permits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces opportunity for subsistence users • More conservative harvest quotas associated with cow harvest
Change ANS (Tier II)	Med	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long seasons • Low risk of overharvest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unpopular with hunters • Reduces statewide hunter opportunity

Proposal 223: Seward Peninsula – Alternatives

Footnotes to Alternatives Matrix (Slide 31)

¹ Ranking estimates ability to accomplish goals of: 1) provide opportunity for hunters; 2) maintain long-term sustainability of muskox population; and 3) allow efficient and effective hunt administration and management.

² The high number of muskox located in close proximity to population centers would make this impossible to administer. There are approximately 250 muskox within 7 miles of Nome, and high numbers of muskox around Teller, White Mountain, Golovin, Shishmaref, and Wales. The high number of hunters with easy access to muskox groups would create over harvest situations even if the department applied 1 hour reporting periods to registration permits.

³ Eighty percent (80%) of 2010 Seward Peninsula Tier I Subsistence Registration permits were made available online.

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Proposal 223: Questions?



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