



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

Department of Fish and Game

DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Central/Southwest

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January 8, 2015

An Agenda Change Request (ACR) has been submitted to the Alaska Board of Game requesting to change 5 AAC 85.015 (a) Hunting seasons and bag limits for black bear, Unit 6D. Under the Board's ACR policy, the Board will accept an ACR only:

- A) for a conservation purpose or reason;
- B) to correct an error in a regulation; or
- C) to correct an effect on a hunt that was unforeseen when a regulation was adopted.

The board will not accept an ACR that is predominantly allocative in nature in the absence of new information that is found by the board to be compelling. [5 AAC 92.005 (a) (2-3)].

With respect to ACR policy acceptance criteria:

- (A) Black bear harvests increased in Unit 6D from the late 1990s to 2007. The Board has taken modest regulatory changes (2005 and 2009) to address the concern of unsustainable harvest black bear harvest in Unit 6D. The number of harvested bears in Unit 6D has declined steadily since 2007 and the department has conservation concerns. Harvests in RY12 and RY13 were respectively 25% and 47% below the previous regulatory year. Data for RY13 was unavailable by the proposal (May) deadline. Additionally, anecdotal reports from a diverse group of users suggest a decline in bears during the last decade. The percentage of females in the harvest has increased the last three regulatory years and has been above management objectives in every year since 2006. Three of the last five years have had exceptional weather that may have impacted black bear behavior, availability and possibly survival. The Department believes this new information regarding a conservation concern warrants the Board's consideration of this issue out of cycle.
- (B) The department is unaware of an error in regulation.
- (C) The department is unaware of any unforeseen effects on the hunt that should be addressed in regulation.

The Department recommends that the board approve this ACR and consider measures to reduce the harvest of black bears in Unit 6D. Changing to a "one bear every three regulatory years" regulation will



reduce harvest among users that annually hunt black bears in Unit 6. However, most successful hunters have only killed one black bear in Unit 6D (10 year average of 77 %.) A review of the last 10 years of data suggests a reduction in harvest by 10% with the proposed action. Of the remaining hunters 9% have killed three or more in a ten year period. These hunters may be more likely to harvest a black bear for food and the most impacted by this proposed action.

The Department recommends that the board consider means for addressing the sustained interest in hunting black bears in Unit 6D and the delay in receiving accurate reports of harvest. Currently, the hunt proceeds with unlimited participation because it is managed with a general season harvest ticket and successful hunters must have their bear sealed within 30 days of harvest. There is a positive customary and traditional use finding for Unit 6 black bears and an amount reasonably necessary for subsistence of 80–120 bears in all of Unit 6.

Delayed information precluded the department and the public from evaluating the magnitude of the decline in harvest in RY12. The RY13 drop in harvest combined with the sustained decline in harvest since 2007 suggests the need for taking action outside the normal cycle.

This is the first of three Agenda Change Requests for black bears in Unit 6D. The department recommends accepting them as a package and if accepted, department will provide analysis on each prior to the meeting where the resulting proposals will be addressed. The department will also provide a management strategy to reduce the percentage of females in the harvest and closely monitor the effects of this new strategy.

Sincerely,



Bruce Dale
Acting Director
Division of Wildlife Conservation



ACR 1 – Change the bag limit for black bears in Unit 6D to one bear every three years.

SUBMITTED BY: David Pinquoch

MEETING ACR SUBMITTED FOR: Work Session

CITE THE REGULATION THAT WILL BE CHANGED IF THIS ACR IS HEARD.
5 AAC 85.015(a). Hunting seasons and bag limits for black bear, Unit 6D.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM YOU WOULD LIKE THE BOARD TO ADDRESS? STATE IN DETAIL THE NATURE OF THE CURRENT PROBLEM. Black bear population doesn't appear sustainable under current regulation. This is evidenced by declining harvest, reduction in age and size of bears harvested, increased percentage of sow harvest and for reasons unknown the last two years cub production appears low.

WHAT SOLUTION DO YOU PREFER? One bear every three regulatory years (based on 2006-2012 data, this would reduce harvest by 50+ bears annually, more than 10%).

STATE IN DETAIL HOW THIS ACR MEETS THE CRITERIA STATED ABOVE.

- a) **for a conservation purpose or reason:** This regulation is designed specifically to reduce the harvest of black bears to conserve the population.
- b) **to correct an error in regulation:** Not applicable.
- c) **to correct an effect on a hunt that was unforeseen when a regulation was adopted:** Not applicable.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF THIS PRBLEM IS NOT SOLVED PRIOR TO THE REGULAR CYCLE? Actual black bear population in Unit 6D is not known. It is clearly declining. This regulation will not reach its full potential until 2018 if approved in 2015. Waiting for the next cycle which will be two or possibly three years away, this regulation wouldn't reach full effect until 2020/2021. I just recently saw new statistics on bear harvest that indicate a steep decline in 2012 and 2013 (partly due to lack of snow and bears being inaccessible to most hunters) and a continued high percentage of sows being harvested. Part of the decline may be from record snowfall in 2011 and a blueberry crop failure in 2012 which might have had an effect on winter survival.

STATE WHY YOUR ACR IS NOT PREDOMINANTLY ALLOCATIVE. The ACR is strictly to reduce harvest to conserve population. It has not allocative purpose.

IF THIS REQUEST IS ALLOCATIVE, STATE THE NEW INFORMATION THAT COMPELS THE BOARD TO CONSIDER AN ALLOCATIVE PROPOSAL OUTSIDE OF THE REGUALR CYCLE. Not applicable.

STATE YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE ISSUE THAT IS THE SUBJECT OF THIS ACR. I am a hunter, a big game transporter in Unit 6D, and I serve on the Whittier Fish and



Game Advisory Committee. Although not formally adopted, the consensus of the Whittier AC was some form of regulation change to reduce bear harvest is warranted and an ACR was verbally supported. The intention was to have another meeting prior to submission and possibly have the AC submit the proposal but time frames didn't work out.

STATE WHETHER THIS ACR HAS BEEN CONSIDERED BEFORE, EITHER AS A PROPOSAL OR AS AN ACR, AND IF SO, DURING WHICH BOARD OF GAME MEETING. I have no knowledge that this specific request (one bear every 3 years) has ever been submitted as a proposal or an ACR. I submitted a proposal last cycle to limit hunters who harvest a sow to one bear every two years which failed.

