



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

Department of Fish and Game

DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Headquarters

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RC 013

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 consider measures to reduce the harvest of black bears in Unit 6D. The vast majority (10 year average of 82%) of harvested bears are taken in the spring. Although the take of females is proportionally higher in the fall (45% females in the fall harvest compared with 30% females in the spring harvest), the total contribution of the fall harvest to the total is minimal. Had the September 25 season start date been used the last 10 years, an average of 36 bears (17 of which were sows) would not have been taken. The overall impact of a season date change on the harvest would be a 9% reduction based on the last 10 years.

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 bear and an amount reasonably necessary for subsistence of 80–120 black 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. The department is preparing an emergency order to reduce the harvest of female bears in spring 2015.

This is the third 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 3 – Modify season dates for hunting black bears in Unit 6D.

SUBMITTED BY: David Pinguoch

MEETING ACR SUBMITTED FOR: Work Session

CITE THE REGULATION THAT WILL BE CHANGED IF THIS ACR IS HEARD.
5 AAC 85.015(a)(2). 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, sow harvest above state average, and for reasons unknown the last two years cub production appears low. Sow harvest has exceeded 50% on fall hunts in recent years.

WHAT SOLUTION DO YOU PREFER? Open Season - September 25-June 10
(Based on 2009-2013 this should reduce harvest by 34 bears annually, 18 of them being sows. September 25th was chosen as most bears have left salmon streams by then when they are most vulnerable).

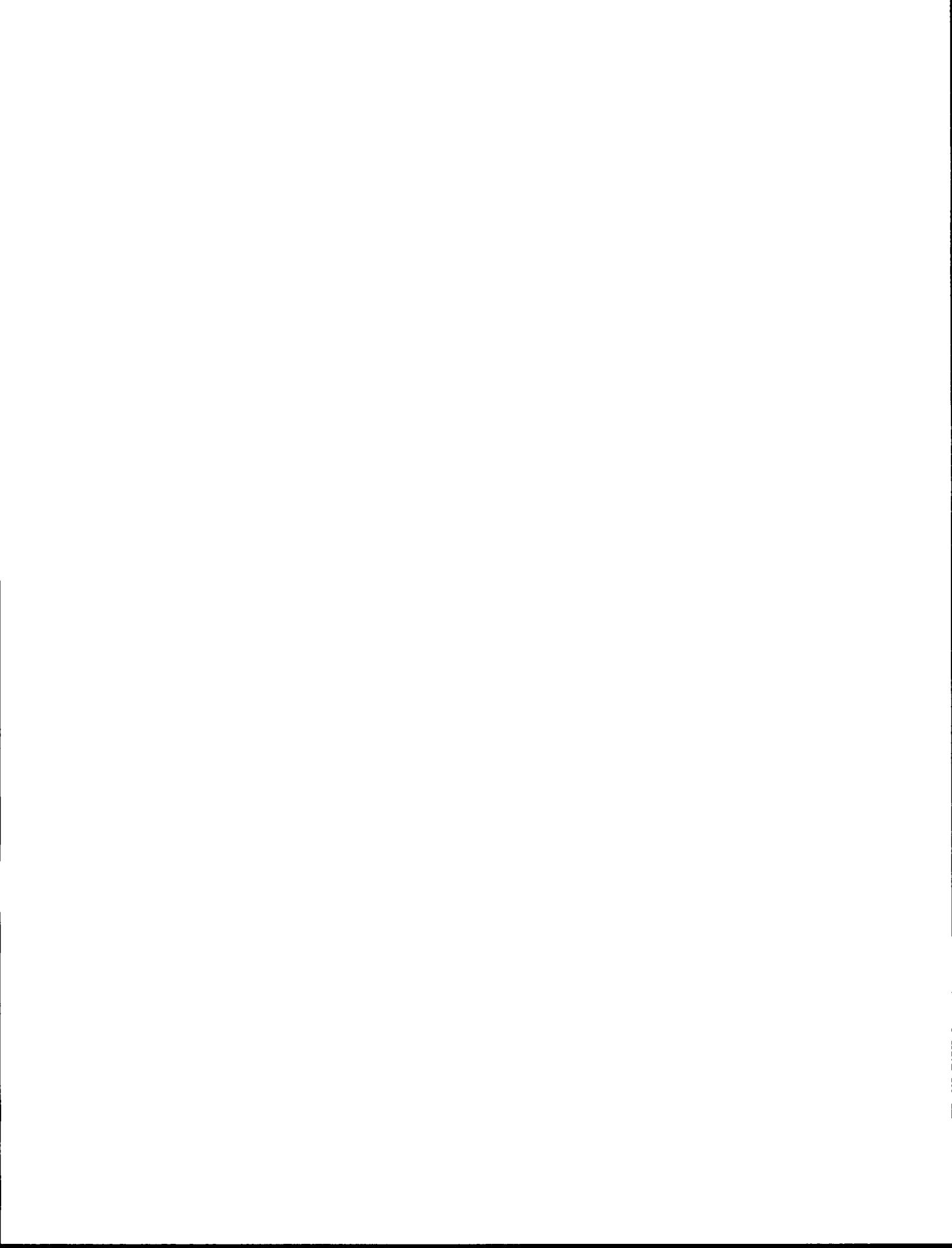
STATE IN DETAIL HOW THIS ACR MEETS THE CRITERIA STATED ABOVE.

- a) **for a conservation purpose or reason:** This regulation is designed specifically to reduce the harvest, particularly sows, 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 PROBLEM IS NOT SOLVED PRIOR TO THE REGULAR CYCLE? Actual black bear population in Unit 6D is not known. It is clearly declining. I just recently received new data compiled by ADF&G that shows a significant drop in harvest (partly due to weather) and a high sow harvest. I remain concerned about increased sow harvest and believe some action to conserve sows is needed and the sooner the better. The 2011 record snowfall and a blueberry crop failure in 2012 may have had an effect on survival rates.

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 REGULAR 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 has ever been submitted as a proposal or an ACR.

