

**PROPOSAL 162 – 5 AAC 92.015(a)(4). Brown bear tag fee exemptions.** Reauthorize resident brown bear tag fee exemptions throughout Interior and Eastern Arctic Alaska as follows:

(a) A resident tag is not required for taking a brown bear in the following units:

(4) Units 12, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26(B), and 26(C)

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** Brown bear tag fee exemptions must be reauthorized annually. Reauthorizing the exemption allows residents, who have not purchased the \$25 brown bear tag, to take bears opportunistically.

Region III (Interior and Eastern Arctic) brown bear populations are healthy, and harvest is monitored through the brown bear sealing requirement. Eliminating all resident brown bear tag fees throughout Region III simplifies regulations, increases resident hunter opportunity, and is not likely to cause declines in these brown bear populations. This reauthorization would assist with our objective of managing Region III brown bear populations for hunter opportunity and would continue to allow hunters to take brown bears opportunistically. During regulatory years 2006–2014, 31% of brown bears harvested by resident hunters in Region III were taken incidentally to other activities compared with 13% statewide.

The Department of Fish and Game (department) estimates that brown bear harvest account for approximately 6% of the bear populations. It is composed primarily of males and is sustainable. Where harvests are elevated (i.e., Units 20A, 20B, 20D, and portions of 26B), brown bear populations are managed by adjusting seasons and bag limits. The resident tag fees that were in place prior to 2010 appeared to have little effect on harvest rates in these areas.

The department also recommends that the tag fee exemptions for subsistence registration permit hunts in Units 19A and 19B (downstream of and including the Aniak River drainage), 21D, and 24 should also be reauthorized to provide additional subsistence opportunity in these areas.

**PROPOSED BY:** Alaska Department of Fish and Game

(HQ-F17-052)

\*\*\*\*\*