

PROPOSAL 175

5 AAC 85.045(a)(11). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

Reauthorize the antlerless moose seasons in Unit 13E as follows:

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
(11)		
Unit 13		
1 moose per regulatory year, only as follows:		
...		
1 antlerless moose by drawing permit only in Unit 13(E); up to 200 permits may be issued; a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf; or	Oct. 1–Oct. 31 (General hunt only)	No open season
...		

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Antlerless moose hunts must be reauthorized annually by the board. This hunt was established during the January 2022 board meeting and as a result has not yet been held. The earliest the hunt can occur is in October of 2023, and the number of permits to be issued has not yet been determined. The current regulation allows hunters to take a limited number of cows in specific areas to keep the population and composition ratios within objectives.

Unit 13 has an active intensive management program, designed to increase moose abundance to within objectives, and increase available harvest for humans. The program has included a predator control component that began in 2004. Since the early 2000s, moose abundance in most subunits has increased until recent years when many subunits have peaked and/or stabilized at, above, or within abundance objectives. As moose populations approach carrying capacity, the population becomes less productive, and may eventually decline. Stabilizing a population below carrying capacity allows it to remain highly productive if additional moose are removed annually. This requires harvest of both cows and bulls. The intensive management abundance objectives for moose in Unit 13 are designed to maintain moose populations in Unit 13 subunits below carrying capacity, at a more productive level. Unit 13E has reached abundance levels for which cow harvest is necessary to stabilize the population at a more productive level and allow for human harvest of excess moose.

The moose abundance index indicated fewer than 4,000 moose in Unit 13E in 2000 but the population has been increasing since then and the current abundance is well above the abundance objectives of 5,000 to 6,000 moose. Harvest levels increased with the increase in abundance, but

harvest levels remain below the harvest objectives of 300 to 600 moose. Bull-to-cow ratios are at the objective of 25 bulls to 100 cows. Additional harvest has been requested by the public for Unit 13E but cannot be obtained without harvesting some cows. Cow moose harvest opportunity will provide for the reduction of moose abundance to within objectives before the population becomes nutritionally stressed and experiences a decline due to nutritional constraints. Furthermore, harvest of cows will allow for additional bull harvest without compromising bull-to-cow ratios, and populations under sustained-yield management are more productive with both bull and cow harvest.

If antlerless moose hunting opportunities are not reauthorized in Unit 13E, the intensive management program and objectives will likely need to be restructured to maintain the moose population within a population size range that does not result in nutritional limitations for the moose and to achieve the harvest objectives recommended by the public, advisory committees, and the board.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F22-51)
