

**PROPOSAL 182**

**5 AAC 85.045(a)(18). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.**

Reauthorize the antlerless moose hunting seasons in Unit 20D as follows:

<b>Units and Bag Limits</b>	<b>Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)</b>	<b>Nonresident Open Season</b>
(18)		
...		
Unit 20(D), that portion lying west of the west bank of the Johnson River and south of the north bank of the Tanana River, except the Delta Junction Management Area and the Bison Range <b><u>Controlled Use Area</u></b> [YOUTH HUNT MANAGEMENT AREA]		
RESIDENT HUNTERS:		
...		
1 antlerless moose by drawing permit only; up to 1,000 permits may be issued in combination with that portion in the Delta Junction Management Area; a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf; or	Oct. 10–Nov. 25 (General hunt only)	
1 antlerless moose by registration permit only; a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf	Oct. 10–Nov. 25 (General hunt only)	
...		
Unit 20(D), that portion within the Bison Range Controlled Use Area		
...		

1 bull with spike-fork or 50-inch antlers or antlers with 4 or more brow tines on one side; or 1 antlerless moose, per lifetime of a hunter, by youth hunt drawing permit only; up to 10 permits may be issued; a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf;

Sept. 1–Sept. 30  
(General hunt only)

Sept. 1–Sept. 30

Unit 20(D), that portion within the Delta Junction Management Area

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 moose every four regulatory years by drawing permit only, a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf; or

Sept. 1–Sept. 15  
(General hunt only)

...

1 antlerless moose by drawing permit only; up to 1,000 permits may be issued in combination with that portion lying west of the west bank of the Johnson River and south of the north bank of the Tanana River; a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf; or

Oct. 10–Nov. 25  
(General hunt only)

1 antlerless moose by registration permit only; a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf

Oct. 10–Nov. 25  
(General hunt only)

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 moose every four regulatory years by drawing permit only, a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf; or

Sept. 1–Sept. 15

...

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** Antlerless moose hunts must be reauthorized annually. The objectives of the Unit 20D antlerless moose hunts are to 1) stabilize population growth of this high-density moose population; 2) address concerns about range degradation, reduced nutritional condition, and reduced reproductive success; 3) make progress

toward meeting the Unit 20D intensive management (IM) harvest objective of 500–700 moose; and 4) provide youth and disabled veteran hunting opportunity.

If antlerless moose hunts are not reauthorized, the moose population could quickly increase to levels beyond the ability of the habitat to support the moose population. Opportunity to hunt a harvestable surplus of cow moose would be lost, and the ability to meet IM harvest objectives could be compromised. Additionally, the population may need to be reduced dramatically if populations increase substantially.

Antlerless moose hunts have been conducted in southwest Unit 20D, which has the highest moose density in the unit. This area has demonstrated population growth due to an abundance of high-quality moose habitat created from extensive land clearing for agricultural use and multiple wildfires over the past 30 years. Total moose harvest in all of Unit 20D averaged 270 moose (an average of 252 bulls and 18 antlerless moose) during regulatory years 2018 and 2019.

Antlerless hunting opportunity is limited at present because this opportunity helps to maintain the moose population within the ability of habitat to support the population. The 2020 population estimate for southwest Unit 20D was 3,399 moose (corrected for sightability) with a density of 3.3 moose per square mile, 32 calves:100 cows and 23 bulls:100 cows. The population has been relatively stable for a decade. Bull:cow ratios have been below 30:100 for the past 5 years, and twinning rates are among the lowest observed in the state (<10%).

Continued antlerless harvest will likely be needed to maintain the population at the optimal density and will help make progress toward the IM harvest objective of 500–700 moose without reducing bull-to-cow ratios below the management objectives. The population trend and harvest rate suggest the low, consistent antlerless harvest provided by the drawing permit hunts in Unit 20D, in conjunction with other mortality factors, is an appropriate rate of antlerless moose mortality that contributes to stability in the southwest Unit 20D moose population. The department did not issue antlerless moose drawing permits in southwest 20D for the fall of 2022 due to the severity of the 2021/2022 winter and the anticipated increase in natural mortality. The department will evaluate browse removal, twinning rates and abundance and other factors throughout 2022 and early winter 2023 to determine if and how many antlerless permits will be issued in fall 2023.

The department will continue to evaluate antlerless moose hunts and their effect on moose density and population growth while monitoring indices of density-dependent moose nutritional conditions in relation to changes in moose density, including proportional removal of current annual growth of winter browse, proportion of females with twin calves, and late-winter calf weights.

Additional drawing or registration permits will be issued only if more harvest is needed in specific areas to maintain optimal moose densities.

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

(HQ-F22-043)

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