

**PROPOSAL 183**

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

Reauthorize the antlerless moose seasons in Unit 20E 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(E), the remainder of of the Ladue River Controlled Use Area		
RESIDENT HUNTERS		
...  1 antlerless moose by drawing permit only; by youth hunt only; up to 100 permits may be issued in combination with the nonresident drawing hunt; a person may not take a cow accompanied by a calf; or	Aug. 5–Sept. 5 (General hunt only) Oct. 15–Nov. 30 (General hunt only)	
1 antlerless moose by drawing permit only; up to 400 permits may be issued; a person may not take a cow accompanied by a calf	Oct. 15–Nov. 30 (General hunt only)	
NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:		
...  1 antlerless moose by drawing permit only; by youth hunt only; up to 100 permits may be issued in combination with the nonresident drawing hunt; a person may not take a cow accompanied by a calf		Aug. 5–Sept. 5 Oct. 15–Nov. 30

Unit 20(E), that portion outside of the Ladue River Controlled Use draining into the Ladue River upstream of the South Fork of the Ladue River, the Dennison Fork of the Fortymile River, and the Mosquito Fork of the Fortymile River drainage.

RESIDENT HUNTERS

...

1 antlerless moose by drawing permit only; by youth hunt only; up to 100 permits may be issued in combination with the nonresident drawing hunt; a person may not take a cow accompanied by a calf; or

Aug. 5–Sept. 5  
(General hunt only)  
Oct. 15–Nov. 30  
(General hunt only)

1 antlerless moose by drawing permit only; up to 400 permits may be issued; a person may not take a cow accompanied by a calf

Oct. 15–Nov. 30  
(General hunt only)

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

...

1 antlerless moose by drawing permit only; by youth hunt only; up to 100 permits may be issued in combination with the nonresident drawing hunt; a person may not take a cow accompanied by a calf

Aug. 5–Sept. 5  
Oct. 15–Nov. 30

...

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** Antlerless moose hunting seasons must be reauthorized annually. The Unit 20E antlerless moose hunts were originally passed by the Board of Game in March 2022, and the primary objectives of the hunts are: 1) slow population growth to avoid habitat damage, 2) help achieve Intensive Management (IM) harvest objectives, and 3) provide the management flexibility to rapidly respond to changes in nutrition.

The moose population within a portion of southern Unit 20E has shown consistent growth since 2005 and has approximately doubled since then, with the cow component of the population

growing at a significantly faster rate than the bull component of the population. Moose densities within a 1,821 mi<sup>2</sup> area along the Taylor Highway in southern Unit 20E increased from 0.68 moose/mi<sup>2</sup> in 2005 to 1.36 moose/mi<sup>2</sup> in 2020, with an estimated annual growth rate of 4.9%. The cow segment of the population grew at an estimated 5.8% per year while the bull segment of the population, which is limited by higher natural mortality and harvest, grew at half the rate. Slowing the population growth rate in order to avoid habitat damage is largely dependent on the ability to control the growth of the female component of the population.

Antlerless harvest will help achieve IM harvest objectives without reducing bull:cow ratios below management objectives. The Unit 20E IM harvest objective is 250–450 moose, and the RY17–RY21 annual average unit-wide reported harvest was 209 moose. Unless nutritional indices decline, the department’s general goal is to harvest 1% or less of the moose population within the antlerless hunt area, which equates to approximately 30 or less moose. This level of harvest would contribute substantially to meeting IM harvest objectives.

Moose nutritional levels are currently healthy in Unit 20E, and the antlerless harvest framework provides management flexibility to rapidly respond to potential future changes in nutrition. Twinning rates are currently 39% (2018-2021 3-year weighted average), and the department closely monitors these rates given the potential for them to lag as a reflection of population-level nutritional condition. The antlerless harvest framework not only provides the ability for the department to rapidly respond to potential future changes in twinning rates (or other nutritional indices), but it also provides the ability to proactively reduce population growth rates in order to maintain the current high nutritional levels.

If the Unit 20E antlerless moose hunts are not reauthorized, and the population growth rates from the last 15 years continue, the ability to stabilize or reduce the population in the future might be inhibited by logistical and social issues. For example, although portions of the area are road accessible, large portions are more remote, and there are logistical challenges to distributing harvest (especially higher levels of harvest) throughout the area. Furthermore, if past growth rates continue unabated and nutritional condition declines, social challenges could occur if more rapid and severe management action (e.g., high number of hunters) was necessary.

**PROPOSED BY:** Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F22-042)  
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