



**Sitka Advisory Committee
Summary of Recommendations
12/7/2022 & 12/14/2022**

Alaska Board of Game Southeast Region Meeting Proposals January 20-24, 2023 Ketchikan, AK			
Proposal Number	Proposal Description		
Support, Support as Amended, Oppose, No Action	Number Support	Number Oppose	Comments, Discussion (list Pros and Cons), Amendments to Proposal, Voting Notes
<i>Note: Effective September 2019, when abstentions occur, the action or decision of a majority of the remaining members at a meeting at which a quorum is present is an act of the committee. For example, a vote tally of 7-6-2 means the motion carries. Members abstaining from voting must provide an explanation that is included in the committee record.</i>			
1	Require certified hunter safety education to hunt in Units 1 - 5		
	0	15	not practical in SE
2	Require hunter orientation for hunting goat in Southeast Region units		
	0	15	current online education course and "one and done" are working
3	Remove the requirement for residents to seal black bear skulls harvested in Units 1 - 4		
			No Action. We do not have black bear in our area.
5	Change the waterfowl season in Units 1 - 4 by creating a split season		
	15	0	Amended: Season would be Sept 1 to November 30. closed December 1 through 15. Open December 16 to 31.
6	Lengthen river otter trapping seasons in Units 1 - 4 to align with Unit 5		
	12	2	Low effort, no population concern
7	Extend marten trapping seasons to align with wolverine seasons in portions of Units 1 - 4 and 5		
	14	0	Amended to change Feb 28 to "last day in February."
8	Extend the marten trapping season in Units 1 and 2		
			No Action. out of area
9	Extend the wolverine trapping season to March 15 in Units 1 - 5		
			No Action. not applicable
10	Decrease the bag limit to four deer in Unit 4, Remainder		
	4	10	Majority:No conservation reason for this; Minority: political stability
11	Decrease the bag limit to four deer in Unit 4, Remainder		
	4	10	Majority:No conservation reason for this; Minority: political stability
12	Open the Mitchell Bay Closed Area in Unit 4 to brown bear hunting		
			No action- out of area



Alaska Board of Game Southeast Region Meeting Proposals

January 20-24, 2023 | Ketchikan, AK

Proposal Number	Proposal Description		
Support, Support as Amended, Oppose, No Action	Number Support	Number Oppose	Comments, Discussion (list Pros and Cons), Amendments to Proposal, Voting Notes
32	Restrict hunters who take nanny goat in Unit 1D from hunting goat the following regulatory year in Unit 1D		
	0	14	amended to substitute "Unit 4" for "Unit 1D". Proposal would encourage non reporting of Nanny kills. Our "one and done" management strategy is working.

Minutes Recorded By: Stacey Wayne
Minutes Approved By: Heather Bauscher
Date: 1/6/2023



Sitka Advisory Committee
12/7/2022 6:00 p.m.
Sitka Sound Science Center & Zoom

AC Members Present:

- Lucas Bastian, Guide
- Steve Ramp, Resident Sportfish
- Tad Fujioka Processor
- Heather Bauscher, Conservation
- Mo Johnson, Seine
- Karen Johnson, at large
- Dick Curren Longline
- John Murray, Troll
- Woody Cyr,
Trapping
- Spencer Chute,
Charter Eric
Jordan, at large
- Stacey Wayne, shellfish
- Kent Barkau, Hunting

ADFG STAFF

Jake Wieliczkiwicz, Assistant area manager for sportfish

Steve Bethune- Area Wildlife biologist

Members of the public

- Carrie Driver, interested in subsistence seat (background in trolling and degree in biology from Humbolt State)
- Scott Wagner, interested in at large seat (general manager at NSRAA, SJ hatchery interested in Alternate seat)
- Mike Coleman-gillnetter
- Mike Vaughn-duck hunter
- Schuyler Mace, interested in HT, hunting or subsistence seat (hand troller, fairly new to fishery)
- Josh Chevalier, interested in subsistence seat, could also serve in HT seat (long history of trolling, subsistence)



Agenda for tonight's meeting:

- Call to order
- Roll Call
- Quorum
- ADF&G Staff intros
- Guests Present
- Approve Agenda
- Approve Previous Minutes
- Elections- Hunting, Subsistence, Hand Troll, Seine, At Large, Alternate (2)
- Public Comment- MSC re-certification process for Alaska salmon is currently underway, there are specific concerns regarding hatcheries and also SE troll Chinook fishery due to issues with Puget Sound orca
- Reports- Chair, ADF&G, Others (Jake Wieliczkievicz has a sport fisheries report of last summer)
- Old Business- NPFMC updates (our AC comments and testimony so far is attached to this email)
- New Business- BoG
- Start digging into Board of Game Proposals "Not Deer" (Deer will be next week)
- Adjourn

Agenda approved

Minutes approved as amended (Steve asked to remove an exclamation point).

Elections:

Interested parties introduce themselves and explain why they want to be elected to the committee.

- Seine Seat: Tad Nominates Moe, Karen seconds, Moe Johnson is elected.
- At large: Steve Nominates Karen, Tad Seconds, Karen Johnson is elected
- Hunting seat: Stacey nominates Kent for hunting seat, Steve seconds, Kent Barkau is elected.
- Hand Troll seat: Tad nominates Josh Chevalier, Josh steps aside in favor of Schuyler Mace. Schuyler Mace is elected to the Hand troll seat.
- Subsistence Seat: Both Josh and Carrie are nominated for subsistence seat. Josh Chevalier wins seat by secret ballot.



- Alternates: Tad nominates Carrie Driver, Steve seconds; Stacey Nominates Scott Wagner for the second alternate seat, Kent seconds. Carrie and Scott are elected to the two alternate seats.

We flip a coin and Carrie will serve in the one year seat and Scott will have the 2 year seat.

FISH REPORT

- Jake Wieliczkiwicz gives a report about sport fishing effort and catch rates this past year and answers questions from the AC.

- total SE sport king catch 42,600, including 34,500 treaty fish, 12,600 below sport allocation

-Sitka area stream survey for coho was > escapement goal as it usually is; 2022 was ~ long term average

- Redoubt sockeye escapement was very high

-Lingcod slot limit was liberalized in an attempt to increase sport catch to closer to GHL

-Good turn out at Swan Lake kid's fishing day

- John Murray: Why were so many Kings (12,600) were left on the table in the sport fishery? Jake indicated that the public had complained about the complexity of the previous regulations, so sportfish simplified the regs and refrained from in-season management, but that meant that they were not able to respond to low inseason catch rates except for removing the 28" size limit in Silver Bay.

-Mo Johnson: What were coho counts in Nakwasina and Katlian?

Jake said that they don't survey Katlian. Nakwasina peak count was 444 which is close to the 10-yr average

Steve: Local residents were frustrated that the resident bag limit in 2022 was lower than it had been in 2021 even though the sport allocation in 2022 was higher than it had been in 2021

Heather Baucher gives a **report on the North Pacific Fisheries Management meeting**: She sent in our comments from our last meeting asking for stricter limits on sablefish, crab and salmon bycatch in the Trawl fisheries. The council will likely wait until their meeting this spring in Sitka to vote on whether to impose stricter limits. Also submitted letter on unguided boat rental issue

Steve **reports on the halibut charter committee meeting that he attended with the region's charter group**. Steve was able to share our concern about unguided fisherman using that



status as a loophole to have more liberal limits on halibut and how this could lead to overfishing. Some of the charter council members especially Andy Mezirow voiced interest in recommending action to create some regulations for unguided boat rental fishery. John M. asks about the difference between the issue in 3A and 2C. Answer- 2C has 1 fish limit and only uses size limits with reverse slot limit to manage harvest. 3A uses more tools including weekly closures, boat limits and annual limits. One of the challenges is formally identifying/defining rental boats.

Steve Bethune reports on regions game issues

He petitioned the BOG to move the GMU 1C/ GMU 4 boundary to the south side of Pleasant Island (near Gustavus). Sitka has a new program technician, Haley. Now we will be able to do more field projects.

He is still lobbying for a new brown bear population study. He feels like the population is steady

We can take up to 172 bears each year; recent average only 120 bears taken per year, and 85% of those are male. That 120 includes all the bears taken in defense of property or by accident. Last year we killed 14 bears in Sitka in 2021 and 5 bears this year. 5 sounds like fewer bears, but that is still one of the highest numbers in history. He has attended the local bear task force and thinks the group will make final recommendations to the city.

Steve has been promoting bear resistant trash cans and thinks that there are grants. He says currently help is available for purchasing electric fencing to deter bears from getting in chicken coops or trash cans.

Tad asks if there is a correlation between harvest rates around town and the rate of problem bears in the town. Steve says that because hunters are targeting trophy size bears, there is not a correlation. He says we have seen a decrease in harvest due to bad weather and non-resident closure in spring of 2020.

Eric asks about aggressive bears in town. Steve reports that he is not surprised that we have not seen any incidence of bears attacking people in town with all the bears we have wandering around town at night. He says the bears are like rats sneaking around the community at night and they really do not want to come into contact with people. He has a hard time locating them when he is called out at night. Almost all the activity happens in the middle of the night. Bears are adept at avoiding people.

We have not been able to get the research updated on population numbers (our numbers are 20 years old) because there is only one team at ADFG to do the study. They have been busy with a study in Haines.



Deer Harvest was up in the past year. Last December we had good hunting with snow bringing the deer to the beaches.

Unit 4 averages 5700 deer taken by 3400 hunters. In the past ten years. Unit 4 has the highest level of harvest and the lowest days per/deer effort in the state. ADFG is moving away from pellet surveys and moving to camera based tracking of deer. Steve was short staffed last year, but hopes to get his cameras into the field for this year. He had anticipated high deer mortality on the beach surveys because of the snow in December last year, but saw no evidence of that in 35 beach mortality surveys.

Mountain goats surveys showed a high of 1900 goats on Baranof island in 2019. Our numbers are still high and goats are doing well. Harvest has been moderate. Historically we had a big drop off in population in 2009. ADFG changed the management on Baranof Island to create multiple (35) management zones and he closes a zone when a nanny is taken (one and done). As a result, we have gone from 20 nannies a year taken by hunters to more like 4. Our harvest rate of Billy goats is back to previous averages.

Board of Game Proposals

Proposal 1: Require certified hunter safety education to hunt in Units 1 - 5

Steve Bethune comments on behalf of ADFG . The department supports hunter education, but would not be able to teach all the classes. Most existing requirements for hunter safety are in urban areas. The department does not know how they could provide classes in all the remote places in our region. Potential loss of opportunity for hunters who aren't able to attend. Skyler asks if it could be specific to the Juneau region. Juneau has hunter safety as part of the school curriculum.

Stacey asks about an online class option. Steve says that might be possible, but would forego the currently required ½ day field sessions which cannot be done online.

Kent asks for more information about the Juneau program and Steve says that ADFG staff in Juneau teaches hunter safety in the Juneau schools

Eric: How many people are injured or killed in hunting accidents? Steve does not have numbers on injured, but believes number of people killed is virtually zero. Eric is opposed to requirements. He worries that some families need family numbers to hunt and that person may not be able to go hunting. Eric recalls having to take his Dad's place as a family hunter. Tad sees the proposal as uncool in that due to the age limits being proposed all the members of the Juneau-Douglas AC that is sponsoring the proposal would be grandfathered in, and the proposal would only affect others. Luke also does not like the requirement, says this would be solving a non-existent problem. Woody would like to see the schools in Sitka follow Juneau's



lead and have the schools here offer the course. Thinks that it is a good concept, but not practical to execute in SE Alaska, and furthermore, no need since the hunter density is very low there is little danger from others. He grew up hunting down south where hunters were much closer together and despite wearing orange accidental injuries still occurred, especially when shooting at running deer.

Steve proposes AMENDMENT **to allow for a Fully online course by the NRA as an alternative to the department course and to make it apply to all hunters born after January 1986.** Stacy 2nds. Eric says it is not worth discussing because it would not pass. **Amendment fails 2-12-1.**

Eric and John: proposal is unpopular with or without the amendment

Proposal 1 fails 0-15.

Proposal 2: requires passing a mountain goat identification quiz for goat hunting in area 4. We already require the online quiz on the honor system for our area. Tad **moves amendment take no action** as it does not apply to our area as we already require the quiz. Kent questions Steve about the history of Nanny harvest and education. Steve says that the attributes the “one and done” policy that shuts down sub-areas whenever a Nanny is taken is the reason that unit 4 nanny harvest dropped some much, and that the education requirement isn’t driving this. Stacey seconds Tad’s motion. John asks for clarification that our requirement is not voluntary, but that no proof of testing is required. Steve Ramp says we should weigh in on the proposal because he thinks that it would make the current quiz more stringent and more formal. ADFG (Bethune) confirms that this is correct. Tad withdraws amendment.

Proposal 2 fails 0-15

Proposal 3: Remove the requirement for residents to seal black bear skulls harvested in Units 1 - 4 Eric moves that we **do not take up proposal 3** because we do not have black bear in our area. **Seconded and passed 15-0**

Proposal 5: Change the waterfowl season in Units 1 - 4 by creating a split season

Steve explains that the Department is looking for consistency in the season and dates that make sense.

Members of the Public:



Mike Vaughn comments that his preference is a fall season with a closure. He does not want a closure the September or October because the duck hunting is good then, or in the first week in November because people hunt deer and birds together at that time. He also thinks people hunt over Thanksgiving weekend.

He suggests opening Sept 1- November 10 close 11-25th of Nov, open Nov 26- December 31 as this would allow for hunting on the Friday, Saturday and Sunday following Thanksgiving on 7 out of the next 10 years. Kent asks why the department did not suggest a closure period. Steve says the department really wanted public comment. Tad says that without closure dates included, the proposal is only half of a proposal. Tad asked Mike if he would support a 14 day closure in mid November with the reopening on Thanksgiving Day. Mike opposes that idea on the grounds that he doesn't think that many people hunt on Thanksgiving, but rather start on the following day.

John Murray clarifies that the season needs to be 101 days.

Woody comments that he only hunts ducks when he is deer hunting in November. He does not like the split season with a closure in mid-November. He worries the deer/duck hunters might be cited for hunting illegally if they bring ducks home after the closure, even if the ducks were taken earlier when the season was open.

Luke likes the concept of the split season but doesn't think that the public can agree on closure dates.

Eric moves to amend the proposal to include a closure from November 11th-25th. John seconds. Tad says the department was disingenuous by not providing dates. Most people will prefer the concept of a split season over either Sept 1-Dec 15 or Sept 16-Dec31, but they will disagree on when the closure should be. Hence the proposal doesn't solve the disagreement, but merely shifts it. He supports the proposed dates. He does not like the season changing every year. When the alternating schedule was proposed, the Sitka AC preferred always starting on either Sept 1 or Sept 16 over alternating. Tad agrees closing any part of October is bad.

Steve can not support having it closed during Thanksgiving, even 3 times in 10 years is too many.

Carrie suggests we change the language to say the closure is the two weeks prior to Thanksgiving.

Woody thinks that would be confusing because Thanksgiving changes every year so the closure would change every year too and the problem with the current season that the proposal is trying to solve is the inconsistency.



Woody proposes **amendment** to change to Sept 1 to Nov 30 with Dec 1 closed for 2 weeks reopen December 16 to the 31st.

Luke seconds Woody's amendment- saying that there are more duck-deer combo hunts in November than in December.

Vote on AMENDMENT to change dates to Sept 1-Nov 30 dates with a closure first 2 weeks in December and reopen December 16-31 PASSES 15-0

Vote to accept Proposal 5 as amended PASSES 15-0

Heather wraps up meeting. Says we will start with Deer next week. Says if we have to meet Dec 21 it would be on zoom.

Adjourn.

Minutes Recorded By: Stacey Wayne

Minutes Approved By: Sitka AC

Date: 12/14/2022



**Sitka Advisory Committee
12/14/2022 6:00 p.m.
NSRAA & Zoom**

AC Members Present:

- Lucas Bastian, Guide
- Steve Ramp, Sportfish
- Tad Fujioka Processor
- Heather Bauscher, Conservation
- Mo Johnson, Seine
- Carrie Driver, alternate
- Josh Chevalier, subsistence
- Karen Johnson, at large
- Stacey Wayne, shellfish
- Kent Barkau, Hunting
- Schuyler Mace-Hand troll
- John Murray, Power Troll
- Woody Cyr, Trapping
- Spencer Chute, Charter
- Eric Jordan, at large, excused
- Scott Wagner excused
- Dick Curren Longline excused

ADFG STAFF

Marysia Szymkowiak, NOAA

Steve Bethune, wildlife biologist

Haley Heniff, ADFG Technician

Members of the public

Thor Stacey, Juneau-Douglas AC member

Atlin Dory, Juneau-Douglas AC vice chair

Mike Vaughn, local hunter

Amy?

Kurt Whitehead, Klawock resident, fishing lodge owner and member of Craig AC, Klawock AC and East POW AC

Andrew Thoms

Ashley Bolwerk



Agenda for tonight's meeting include:

- Federal Subsistence Board Deer Proposals
- Board of Game Deer Proposals
- Remaining Board of Game Proposals
- Other Business

Motion to approve previous minutes as amended; Carried w/o Objection

Kurt Whitehead: POW deer population has been going down since 2012 especially since 2018, as the result of change in wolf management. He believes that the wolf population is the cause of the drop of deer population there. After two previous attempts were stopped there is now a 3rd effort to list SE AK wolves as a subspecies protected under ESA afoot. He does not want the wolves listed as endangered because then they could not hunt them. The subsequent explosion in wolf numbers would drive deer populations to unhuntably low numbers. POW residents need access to subsistence venison, as grocery prices are very high and stores are far from the smaller communities. If the SE wolves were ESA listed, this would be a big deal for not just POW, but mainland areas and other island with wolves- but perhaps not such a big deal for ABC islands. He is seeking the Sitka AC signing off on the letter or at least offering suggestions on improving it. He lauds ADF&G's great job in previous wolf management.

Woody comments that Sitka locals used to hunt on POW because the hunting was better than around here. They do not do that any more. He remembers that at one point the wolf population was estimated at 125 and then 120 were killed in a single trapping season, so the pre-season estimate must have been far too low.

Kurt reports that in 2012 the wolf management changed. Average take used to be 80-100 over a Dec-March season. In 2012 the Quota was set at only 12 wolves. The quota went up slightly each year, but only to as high as 30 by 2014, and the wolf population blew up. In 2019 it went to a tiered management system with a goal of 150 to 200 wolves on POW. In 2019 they estimated there were 172 wolves before the season opened. In a 5 week season about 165 were caught and plenty remained. Clearly the pre-season estimate had been too low. Then ADFG changed their enumeration methodology to use different sample systems like trail cameras and hair boards. This is supported by the local Haida tribe. They proved the ADFG estimates were off. There are current BoG proposals that are still using the old data.

Ten years ago, deer were 60 percent of the diet of POW wolves, and now deer is only about 40 percent of their diet. They are now eating more black bear and beaver.. But the local beaver numbers are way down now. The wolves are eating themselves out of house and home and will



crash the deer stocks if allowed to continue. They are resorting to eating crab apples, chitons and sea otter(!)

Kurt continued. It used to be that if you drove from Hydaburg to Craig, you might see 80-100 deer. This year in my most recent drive, I saw zero. I used to guide deer hunters on POW from 2006-2018, but that last year the hunting was embarrassingly poor so I gave up guiding.

John comments that this is not a Sitka topic. Not something he thinks we should weigh in on.

Schlyer asks for hunting effort and harvest data.

It is not readily available from ADFG staff at the moment.

Mo agrees that it is out of our area. We do not know how much of the population drop is due to wolves and how much is due to clear cuts becoming poorer deer habitat. Mo says that he can support a general statement of a preference for State management over Federal, but nothing specific to this issue.

Mo moves that we do not take action. Steve seconds, Passes unanimously.

NOAA would like to do a survey with us, but Marysia Szymkowiak's Zoom connection has been lost and the group agrees that we don't have time to talk about it before Christmas anyway.

Chair report on North Pacific Fisheries Management Council. They agreed to explore what additional potential bycatch limits might look like. The Advisory Panel supported starting an analysis into halibut catch from rental boats, but the council did not take it up at this meeting. We need to bring the issue up again at the next meeting.

Steve recognizes Heather's good work going to the meeting.

Tad moves and John 2nd that we address the Federal deer proposals before the state deer proposals. Motion carries 7-6-1

Tad moves that we do not take a position on the Federal proposals as they are not in our area. John seconds. There is general agreement that the Hoonah and Angoon proposals are not in our area, but clarification on the area encompassed by the Pelican proposal is requested and subsequently provided by ADFG staff.

Luke: The Pelican proposal is our area. This affects some Sitkans. I see a trend in locals excluding others from hunting nearby in Interior caribou and sheep hunts.



Josh comments how in Ketchikan they are moving to exclude hunters from other areas. He cautions about the need to prepare for losing our rural designation.

Steve comments that should talk about the federal proposals. He opposes the Pelican proposals, but could support No Action on the Hoonah and Angoon proposals.

John: Sure, a few Sitkans might hunt these areas once in a while, but they aren't our main hunting grounds. These proposals are directed at Juneau, not at us.

Heather feels we should be consistent about not discussing the proposals out of our area.

Mo agrees. I used to hunt around Tenakee, but that's not my backyard. I'm not a legitimate stakeholder. The actual locals should be the ones with the voice.

Vote on proposal to **TAKE NO ACTION on the federal deer proposals. Motion carries 8-6**

Tad moves to support BOG proposals 10 and 11 together. Seconded by John

Proposal 10 & 11 would reduce the sport hunting bag limit in most of GMU 4 from 6 deer to 4 deer. The limit in NE Chichagof would remain at 3 deer under the proposals.

Steve Bethune: department opposes this proposal, but can manage under either a 4 or 6 deer limit. Unit 4 consistently has the highest pellet counts in SE. Surveys of alpine and deer pellet counts and beach mortality all show strong deer populations in GMU 4. Even in 2022, after a big snow winter, with a concerted effort (35 surveys vs 15 normally) to check beaches, he did not see significant deer winterkill on the beaches. The last bad winter was 2007-8 when ~75% of the deer died. Population now high and stable. We harvest more deer in this area than any other GMU. We average 5700 deer a year taken by 3400 hunters. Our days of effort per deer is 2.3 days which is the lowest in the state. Harvest has been high and stable since 2011.

Steve continues: The GMU 4 bag limit has been 4 deer since before statehood, until 2019 when it was raised to 6 deer. After the rule change, an average of 88 additional deer/yr were taken by non federally qualified hunters-~80% from Juneau. Sitka hunters are federally qualified and have been able to take 6 deer and have an additional month (January) to hunt under Federal rules. Unit 4 is not a very popular place for non resident hunters because the deer have smaller antlers. Of the NFQ hunters in GMU 4 since the limit was increased in 2019, 37% took no deer, 31% took 1 deer, 15% took 2 deer, 9% took 3 deer, 5% took 4 deer, 3% took 5 or 6 deer. Four deer appears to be adequate for most NFQ hunters. The 3% of hunters that took more than 4 deer only accounted for 88 additional deer/year

Tad: Does that 88 additional deer include situations where a hunter would previously have stopped at 3 deer in order to save his last tag for a trophy and never fills it because he didn't



encounter a deer worthy of his last tag, but now the hunter takes four deer knowing that he still has two tags left for trophies?

Steve Bethune: No, the department doesn't have any way of knowing what hunters are thinking on that level.

Steve continues: These proposals were submitted as an alternative to the 3 federal proposals that would limit or exclude NFQ hunters more severely. However, the department believes approving this proposal will not ensure the Federal Board won't also approve the more limiting proposals. The department does not believe there is a scarcity issue that would warrant this proposal.

Steve Ramp asks if hunting could ever have an effect on the deer herd in our region.

Steve Bethune explains that there just is not enough hunter effort to have an effect on the deer population at the current level. If we have a tough winter, that could change, but in that case, the department can limit hunting for does.

Luke- When the snow is deep and the deer are on the beaches, a guy can shoot 6 deer in a day. What effect does high harvest have on the remaining deer when there is a bad winter?

Steve Bethune: Two schools of thought on this- One is that the deer are likely to die anyway, so no harm in shooting them; You can't stockpile deer. The other is that you want to protect the does. They are more likely to survive the winter and their survival is more critical for the subsequent recovery.

John: Would passage of these proposals affect Sitka deer hunters?

Steve Bethune: Only minimally- so long as Sitka retains its Federal subsistence designation, the only effect that these proposals would have is that a Sitkan would have to be on Federal land when shooting their 5th or 6th deer.

Andrew Thoms (public) comments that it is important to protect deer hunting opportunities for rural residents. Some of these small communities are expressing concern and we should look into why. There are changes occurring that are triggering these Federal proposals.

Ashley Bolwerk (public) comments that we are seeing proposals because people in Pelican, Hoonah and Angoon are concerned. Maybe ADFG data is not sufficiently detailed at the local level. We need to talk to the locals and see why they are having trouble getting deer. She points out that these local people may be hunting easily accessible spots which are not the focus of the ADFG surveys. Localized depletion wouldn't necessarily be reflected in ADF&G's broad Unit 4 surveys.



Thor Stacey (public) is commenting from Juneau. He is a hunting guide and is the Director of Government Affairs for the Professional Hunters Association. He recognizes these BoG proposals as an olive branch in hopes of heading off Federal proposals that would be more restrictive. Thor says that they were submitted by Juneau residents. He hunts deer in unit 4 near Elfin Cove. He supports rural preference in times of shortage. He is concerned about the divisive nature of the Federal proposals that exclude some Alaskans. He asks us to approve the proposal to reduce the limit from 6 deer to 4. While the population is able to withstand the extra harvest, these are purely allocative proposals. Four deer per person is a decent number. He is willing to take a minor reduction in order to avoid potentially harsher restrictions in the future. He wants to get back to the stability enjoyed prior to 2019. Allocation is settled by negotiations. He wants to negotiate.

Atlin Daughtery (Public) from the Juneau AC. He is a 3rd generation Alaskan, fisherman, hunting guide, hunter. Hunts Icy Straits. He would like us to support proposals 10 and 11 in the hopes that areas around Hoonah, Pelican and Angoon are not subject to even more severe restrictions for non Federally-qualified hunters. Wants to return to the stability of the previous era. Four deer per person is plenty. Most families that are into hunting enough to have one hunter who takes four deer have more than one hunter in the family anyway.

John Murray clarifies that these Juneau hunters want to see the bag limit reduced in the hopes that it will prompt the federal board to not adopt one of the more restrictive alternatives.

Thor Stacey responds that he feels the increase in the bag limit a few years ago prompted a war about deer hunting opportunities between NFQ and FQ hunters. The more severe local restrictions will affect village family members who move to Juneau or Ketchikan. They won't be able to return to the villages and hunt with family members. They would be caught in the middle of this political fight.

Steve Ramp- Opposed to these proposals. Doesn't believe that the opportunity should be reduced unless there are conservation concerns. Afraid that Sitka might lose rural priority in the future.

Luke is opposed. He does not see a conservation issue given the minimal additional harvest. Doesn't like the State attempting to negotiate with the Federal Subsistence Board. Does not think passing 10 and 11 would change what the subsistence board will do.

Schlyer is opposed as he doesn't know what the Federal Board will do and does not see this as an effective form of negotiation.

Tad is disappointed with ADFG taking a strong stance on these deer proposals because they are allocative and the department is supposed to be neutral on allocative proposals. Three years ago when the proposal to raise the limit from 4 deer to 6 was submitted the department was



neutral-as was proper. But now, with no change in the biological situation, they are very strongly opposed to changing back. The department was similarly neutral when the limit in mainland GMU 1c was dropped from 4 deer to two bucks even though the department stated that there was no pressing biological concern.

Tad continues, saying that it is important that the department maintain neutrality on allocative proposals because if a user group perceives the department as being biased against them, the department's relationship with that user group suffers. The resulting communication barriers and distortions handicaps the department's ability to manage, which is their primary responsibility.

He supports proposals 10 and 11, as it would be good to go back to a 4 deer limit before NFQ hunters become entrenched in a 6 deer limit. There will be a bad winter sooner or later, and there will be more resistance to restrictions if the liberal limits have had time to become accepted. Tad lauds the Juneau resident proposers who are willing to return their limits to the old 4 deer level for long-term stability.

Tad points out that Alaska has a Constitutional priority for subsistence. When the ANS is not being met, there is no controversy when a non-subsistence user's harvest is reduced by one deer in order to increase a subsistence user's harvest by one deer. However, in many cases, the non-subsistence harvest has to be reduced by more than one deer in order to raise the deer density to the point that the subsistence harvest increases by one deer. This sort of scenario is common in fisheries. Determining the necessary ratio of non-subsistence harvest reduction to subsistence harvest increase is controversial, but the appropriate ratio is generally understood to be larger than 1:1.

Tad refers to personal experience where his long-productive favorite deer hunting area recently stopped producing many deer. After more than 15 years of high success, he has been forced to hunt other areas. He found deer in other places, but he questions whether he would have done so had there been more competition to the point where he couldn't go elsewhere without moving into ground recently vacated by another hunter. He could easily envision a situation where competition would contribute to reduced harvest following a naturally-occurring change in deer habits, even if the level of competition hadn't increased. He points out that the concerns of the local villages might be merited even if the overall deer density in GMU 4 is high and outside pressure hasn't increased.

Carrie asks about the history of the bag limit change. Steve Bethune explains the change happened because a member of the public asked for a higher limit. It did not happen because of higher populations. She talks about migrating wolf packs and an increase in pathogens if the deer herd is too dense.



Steve Ramp talks about the concern about too big a herd and the carrying capacity of the land and the danger of overbrowsing leading to a population crash

Vote on proposals 10 & 11 (considered simultaneously) fails 4-10

M/S Tad/Woody to support Proposal 6 to extend the river otter season.

Steve Bethune says the current season has been in place since 1983 and that it provides adequate opportunity while maintaining the population. The department is neutral.

Tad (former trapping representative) comments that he appreciates the department's neutrality on this allocative proposal. He says that the department should be consistently neutral when weighing in on allocative issues when both alternatives provide adequate opportunity while maintaining the population. He comments that he has trapped many otter on both ends of the current season and that the pelts have always been prime, so he thinks that they would be in good shape under the proposed season as well. There is not much pressure now with fewer trappers, so a lengthened season would not increase the total harvest beyond what was taken historically. He is in support.

Woody (trapping representative) comments that he too supports the proposal because there is no conservation concern. Otter bycatch occurs in beaver sets. Beaver season runs later into the spring, so it would be good to more closely align these seasons. Fur primeness is a function of photoperiod which is a function of latitude, so as the proposer states, the fur should be just as prime in GMUs 1-5 as it is in GMU 9.

John Murray worries about the increased overlap on the time the mothers are rearing young.

Tad comments that the current harvest, and even the likely harvest under the proposed season is so low that the additional stress on the population of otter during pupping season is not likely to be an issue. If the harvest was approaching the sustainable yield, then it would be necessary to consider how to manage the harvest with minimal impact on the population, but given the current very low effort, there are plenty of otter to spare. The general trend is dropping prices and declining effort. Otter pelts are down from over \$200 to \$40-if you can find a buyer at all. Not many people are trapping compared to 80-100 years ago, or even compared to 20-30 years ago. Hence no concerns that current harvest would exceed sustainable limits even with reduced reproductive levels.

Proposal 6 Passes 12-2



M/S Woody/Tad to support Proposal 7 to expand the marten trapping season

Steve Bethune reports the effort has followed prices. Prices are down. Pros would be more opportunity, Cons would be misaligning the season with seasons for other species- specifically mink. Says that marten tend to run on a six year cycle. They were very high in 2012, which coincided with the very high prices, and high, but not as high in 2018.

Tad moves to Amend to change the proposed closing date of “Feb 28” to “last day of February” to avoid issues with leap years. Amendment accepted as friendly.

Proposal 7 passes as amended to change the closing date to “last day of February” 14-0

Move to take no action on Proposal 8 (out of area) and 9 (not applicable); passes without objection

M/S Steve Ramp/Luke to overturn previous decision to take no action on Proposal 12 to open Mitchell Bay to Bear Hunting

Steve Bethune reports that the Admiralty GHL is 62 bears/yr and the recent harvest has been around 42 bears/yr. The area was closed to hunting in order to increase opportunities for bear viewing 1991. The native corp Kootznohoo is a major landowner and feels strongly about keeping the area closed. They cite safety concerns over wounded bears attacking people among other concerns. It is a polarizing issue and the BoG voted to retain the closure as recently as 2004. The cruise ships have asked to keep it closed for wildlife viewing. Little evidence that brown bear predation impacts the deer population despite what the proposer claims. Only 6 DLPs in Angoon in the last 10 years. Angoon locals do not hunt brown bears and usually call ADFG for problem bears. Bears have local significance for Angoon Natives. Not much bear hunting occurs in the Angoon area now as the prime areas are closed.

Tad asks if the dump is open for hunting. It is not.

Kent asks if there is a concession system for guiding in the area and Steve Bethune says there are 3 companies that have permits to guide bear hunts in this area.

Luke points out that all three of the proposals to liberalize bear hunting were submitted by employees of one of those guiding companies.

Mo says that this is out of our area. We shouldn't want to get into Angoon's backyard- we don't want other AC's interfering with our local issues. We had concerns over halibut and developed



the Local Area Management Plan (LAMP). Angoon has had bear concerns. They have developed a local plan.

Woody says we should not mess with the management plan for this area. It was hard fought.

John says the Forest Service probably took 10 years to develop the plan.

Steve: After listening to the discussion, I have changed my mind. Withdraws motion, thus allowing previous **No Action** position **on proposal 12** to stand.

Steve Bethune explains that he believes that the BoG is likely to consider proposal 32 in the context of the entire SE region. As written, the proposal would prohibit a goat hunter that shoots a nanny in GMU 1-D from hunting goats there in the following year. Since GMU 1-D is far from Sitka, for the purpose of allowing discussion on a proposal that would otherwise be out of area, Tad proposes the AC support an amended version of Proposal 32 with substitute language replacing "Unit 1-D" with "Unit 4". Kent seconds.

Woody says that he thinks a penalty of this nature would result in some nannies that were accidentally shot being left in the field by a hunter who didn't want to be penalized.

Stacy agrees that a penalty is likely to lead to dead goats being left in the field.

Steve Bethune comments that currently our management practice is to close a particular drainage once a nanny has been taken (referred to as "one and done"). This uses hunter peer pressure and has drastically reduced Nanny harvest. We have gone from 20 nannies/yr to 4 nannies per year. But there are a few hunters that prefer nannies for better meat quality.

Steve Ramp asks if the proposed approach has been effective elsewhere in the state.

Steve Bethune responds that Kenai has a 5 year penalty for female harvest. It has not been shown to be effective, but most of that area is managed under drawing hunts, so losing the opportunity to hunt for five years is not a meaningful penalty since you aren't likely to get drawn again anyway.

Woody said that this past season he shot a goat but it fell off a cliff and he wasn't able to recover it. He punched his tag and reported the kill to ADFG. He asks how that would be handled under the proposal since the sex of the goat wouldn't be provably known.

Steve Bethune responded that he would have to make up some policy, but it likely would be considered a nanny and the penalty would apply.

Kent asks about how climate change affects long term prospects for goats as the ice and snow cover are reduced.



Steve Bethune says that at this time there is still suitable habitat that goats have not colonized, so habitat availability doesn't appear to be a limiting factor at this time.

Proposal 32 as amended to apply to GMU 4 fails 0-14.

Minutes Recorded By: Stacey Wayne
Minutes Approved By: Heather Bauscher
Date: 1/6/2023

DRAFT