



Department of Fish and Game

DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
Headquarters

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An Agenda Change Request (ACR 4) has been submitted to the Alaska Board of Game requesting to change 5 AAC 85.050 hunting seasons and bag limits for muskoxen. The proponent is asking the board to create a targeted hunt for muskox in Unit 23 for the months of June through October to allow for the take of bull muskox.

With respect to the board's Agenda Change Request (ACR) acceptance criteria (5 AAC 92.005):

- A. The department is unaware of any error in regulation.
- B. The department is unaware of any effects of regulations that were unforeseen when the regulation was adopted.
- C. The department is unaware of any biological concerns.
- D. The department is unaware of any unforeseen or unexpected events that would otherwise restrict or reduce a reasonable opportunity for customary and traditional wildlife uses as defined in AS 16.05.258(f).
- E. The department is unaware of any unexpected resource situation that would cause a biologically allowable resource harvest to be precluded by delayed regulatory action.

There is a positive customary and traditional (C&T) use finding for muskox in Unit 22 and Unit 23, that portion south and west of Kobuk River drainage, and that portion of Unit 26(A) west of the Topagoruk River following 156° W. Long. south to the Unit 26(A) border with an amount reasonably necessary for subsistence uses (ANS) of 100 – 150 muskox, including 10 - 25 in Unit 22(E); and there is a positive C&T finding in Unit 23, that portion north and west of the Kobuk River drainage, and that portion of Unit 26(A) west of the Topagoruk River following 156° W. Long. south of the Unit 26(A) border with an ANS of 18 – 22 muskox.

The Cape Thompson muskox population inhabits the area north and west of the Kobuk River within Unit 23 and the southwestern portion of Unit 26A. A small portion of the population occupies a relatively stable, core range between the mouth of the Noatak River and Cape Sabine within approximately 20 miles of the Chukchi Sea coast. It also includes the lower 10 miles of the Agashashok River.

Hunting of the Cape Thompson population is currently managed under the Tier II hunt structure as the harvestable surplus currently falls below the minimum ANS. The Unit 23 Tier II hunt area, TX107, is defined as that area north and west of the Kobuk River drainage, excluding Cape Krusenstern National Monument. The hunt area includes State, Federal, and privately owned lands, including those of Sisaulik Peninsula.

The Cape Thompson population is co-managed with the National Park Service (NPS), and the harvestable surplus is divided equally between State and Federal managers. Currently, the state issues 3 TX107 permits and the NPS issues 1 permit under the FX2312 permit for lands north and west of the Kobuk River drainage and 2, FX2303 permits for Cape Krusenstern National Monument. Only federally qualified subsistence users may hunt under the federal permits. All permits issued under State and Federal regulation allow for the take of one (1) mature bull with a season of Aug. 1-Mar. 15. Local residents in both Unit 22 and Unit 23 have expressed concern about musk ox near communities. The intent of the ACR is to allow the take of muskox near communities and outside existing hunts.

The next regularly scheduled board meeting for Arctic and Western regulations is during winter/spring of 2023/2024 and 2026/2027. The Department recommends the Board adopt this ACR to address issues related to public safety. The hunt would allow the Department to allow hunters to harvest a muskox that represents a public safety concern. This addresses issues raised by the communities and is modeled after the hot spot hunt for moose in the Mat-SU Valley.

If the board accepts this ACR, the department recommends the proposal come before the board at its January 2024 meeting in Kotzebue because the meeting is in Unit 23.

Sincerely,



Ryan Scott
Acting Director
Division of Wildlife Conservation