

PROPOSAL 138

5 AAC 85.020. Hunting seasons and bag limits for brown bear.

5 AAC 92.044. Permit for hunting bear with the use of bait or scent lures.

Allow brown bears to be taken over bait in Unit 20D south of the Tanana River as follows:

Amend the current regulation to allow grizzly/brown bears to be harvested at a bait station in the entirety of Unit 20D by striking the phrases “that portion of” and “north of the Tanana River”, from Section (b)(1) and (b)(13). After amendment the regulation would read “...20(A), 20(B), 20(C), 20(D), 20(E)...”, for both of the aforementioned sections.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? In the Delta Junction area, the winter of 2021-2022 had the largest snow accumulation in recorded history, per USDA-NRCS snow accumulation data. Making the event even more destructive, a mid-winter rain event put a two-inch ice layer in the middle of the snowpack. All wildlife in Unit 20D south suffered from the extremely hard winter, but especially the ungulates. According to ADF&G surveys completed and reported to the Delta Advisory Committee by local area biologists, the Delta bison and the Macomb Plateau caribou herd populations were reduced by almost 50% and the moose population by 40%.

According to ADF&G biologist out of Palmer, Alaska, in his “determining kill rates of ungulate calves” research, a mature female grizzly/brown bear consumed 44 calves in 25 days and a mature male consumed 42 calves in 26 days. This amount of predation could be extremely devastating to the remaining population of the ungulates in the unit. The biologist also produced and compiled data that states: “the cautious approach applied to grizzly/brown bear management may not be necessary” and that the population estimates should not be based on harvest but along with other facts that support a higher harvest of grizzly/brown bears as long as the breeding females and their young are protected. This information is in the research article “Effects on Harvest of Brown Bear Population in Alaska” which also supports research completed by the Delta ADF&G office that demonstrates that these bears travel a large area and will repopulate areas with lower bear densities and even produce more cubs to do so. Unit 20D south has basically become a sanctuary for these bears as you can bait in every unit surrounding this portion of land, yet all of the surrounding areas are still supporting a healthy population of grizzly/brown bears after years of baiting. At this point, there is no biological data that shows any type of a conservation concern for the grizzly/brown bear population. There is, however, growing concern based on last years surveys, for the ungulate population after our heavy losses of sheep, caribou, bison and moose last year, which demonstrates that this area should be opened to harvesting grizzly bears over bait stations. This would also simplify the regulation to create continuity throughout the unit. It may also be prudent to be proactive in this matter and eliminate this lost opportunity for harvest, rather than having to depend on the department to conduct predator control later on which is a costly endeavor.

PROPOSED BY: Delta Fish and Game Advisory Committee

(EG-F23-243)
