

Fairbanks Area – Units 20A, 20B, 20C, 20F & 25C

PROPOSAL 171

5 AAC 85.045 Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

Change all general season harvest ticket hunts to registration permits for moose in Units 20A, 20B, 20C, 20F and 25C as follows:

Require a registration permit instead of a general season harvest ticket for all general season moose hunts in Units 20A, 20B, 20C, 20F, and 25C. No changes to seasons or bag limits.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Fairbanks area Units 20A, 20B, 20C, 20F and 25C, have some of the highest hunter effort and harvest in the state. During 2018-2022 an average of 5,088 hunters harvested 1,200 moose from these units. Units 20A, 20B and 20C are designated Intensive Management (IM) units and are managed for high harvest. Units 20F and 25C both have low density moose populations but are highly accessible and have “any bull” bag limits. The department would like to switch from harvest tickets in these units to one single registration permit. This would allow the department to collect more reliable harvest and effort data and help maximize moose hunting opportunity and harvest. Registration permits allow the department to better track how many permits are issued and have proven to provide the department more accurate and reliable harvest and effort data. Issuing one permit for all five units makes it easier for hunters to have the proper paperwork to hunt an area. Hunters would also be able to obtain these permits at any ADF&G office and they would also be available online.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

(HQ-F23-058)

PROPOSAL 172

5 AAC 85.045. Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

Create a muzzleloader only moose hunt for residents and nonresidents in Unit 20A as follows:

We would like the Board of Game to consider creating a new draw hunt in Unit 20A for certified muzzleloader hunters. A legal animal would be defined as any bull for residents and four brow tines or 50” or more for nonresidents. The hunt area would be the Yanert River drainage, above Revine Creek, including the portion of the Moody Creek drainage above the mouth of Copeland Creek. The hunt dates would be the same as the current DM766 permit (Nov. 1-Dec. 15). The proposed area is away from residential housing and the highway; and would therefore take some planning to be successful, similar to DM766. The number of permits would be set by the local moose biologist’s recommendation annually, but I would anticipate up to 40 permits be made available.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? There are a limited number of winter moose hunts available. The current muzzleloader hunt in Unit 20A (DM766) is becoming more popular and is only available to hunters at most every other year, due to the regulation limiting hunters to not apply for draw hunts the following year after they have been awarded a permit. Creating a draw hunt in the Yanert and Moody River drainages with a limited number of permits would enable hunters to access an area that is normally difficult to access during general season. Harvesting a limited number of bulls would likely have little impact on the overall population.

PROPOSAL 173

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

Reauthorize the antlerless moose seasons in Unit 20A as follows:

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
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(18)

Unit 20(A), the Ferry Trail
Management Area,
Wood River Controlled
Use Area, and the Yanert
Controlled Use Area

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

...

1 antlerless moose by
drawing permit only; up
to 2,000 permits may
be issued in combination
with the Remainder of
Unit 20(A); a person may
not take a cow accompanied
by a calf; or

Aug. 15–Nov. 15

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

Oct. 1–Feb. 28

...

1 moose by targeted
permit only; by crossbow
shotgun, or bow and arrow
only; up to 100 permits may
be issued

Season to be announced
by emergency order

...

Remainder of Unit 20(A)

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

...

1 antlerless moose by drawing permit only; up to 2,000 permits may be issued in combination with Unit 20(A), the Ferry Trail Management Area, Wood River Controlled Use Area, and the Yanert Controlled Use Area; a person may not take a cow accompanied by a calf; or

Aug. 15–Nov. 15

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

Aug. 25–last day of Feb.

...

1 moose by targeted permit only; by crossbow, shotgun, or bow and arrow only; up to 100 permits may be issued

Season to be announced by emergency order

...

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Antlerless moose hunting seasons must be reauthorized annually. Antlerless hunts are important for maintaining the moose population at levels that the habitat can support. Antlerless hunts also help regulate moose population growth, help to meet Intensive Management (IM) objectives for high levels of harvest, and provide subsistence hunters with a reasonable opportunity to pursue moose for subsistence uses without reducing bull:cow ratios.

If antlerless moose hunts are not reauthorized, the moose population could increase to levels beyond the ability of the habitat to support the moose population. Allowing the population to grow beyond what the habitat can support may require the population to be reduced dramatically to avoid long term habitat damage. Opportunity to hunt a harvestable surplus of cow moose would be lost, and the ability to meet IM harvest objectives could be compromised. Subsistence hunters in the portion of Unit 20A outside the

Fairbanks Nonsubsistence Area (part of the western Tanana Flats) may not have a reasonable opportunity to pursue moose for subsistence uses.

Reauthorizing antlerless moose hunts will allow hunting opportunity and harvest to increase and allow the Department of Fish and Game to manage the moose populations at an optimum level. The additional harvest will help in meeting IM harvest objectives without reducing bull:cow ratios. Meat and subsistence hunters will benefit from the opportunity to harvest cow moose. Moose populations will benefit by maintaining moose densities at a level compatible with their habitat. Motorists and residents may benefit from reduced moose–vehicle collisions and moose–human conflicts.

The current objective is to maintain moose numbers within the IM population objective of 10,000–15,000 moose, while monitoring indicators of moose and habitat condition for positive density-dependent responses. The Unit 20A population was estimated at between 9,240–12,800 moose (90% confidence interval) in November 2022. There is an estimated 5,040 mi² of moose habitat in Unit 20A which equates to a moose density of between 1.8 and 2.5 moose/mi². The median of this estimate falls within the IM population objective. The department will continue to monitor Unit 20A twinning rates and short yearling weights as indices of nutritional condition for this moose population. The department has observed a slow and consistent increase in both twinning rates (16%) and short yearling weights (400lbs) and are nearing the nutritional thresholds of 20% twinning rates and 400lb short yearlings. This indicates that the nutritional condition of this population is improving. However, the department does not want the population to further increase until we observe both 20% twinning rate and 400lb short yearlings weight thresholds. The department will continue to monitor Unit 20A twinning rates and short yearling weights and may recommend fewer antlerless hunts in the future if these two thresholds are surpassed. However, at the current density of moose, the intention is to harvest antlerless moose at a rate of 1% of the population (92-128 antlerless moose) which has been shown to stabilize the moose population at its current level. Antlerless harvest will occur by drawing permit for a majority of Unit 20A and by registration permit outside the Fairbanks non-subsistence area in northwest Unit 20A near Nenana. The harvest objective will be based on the most recent survey results. The antlerless harvest will target the highest density portions of Unit 20A. The department did not issue antlerless moose permits in 2022 because of the severe winter that occurred in 2021/2022 and the anticipated increased mortality. Antlerless moose permits in 2023 were not issued because a population estimate was not completed until after the drawing permit application period ended. The next possible antlerless moose hunt would occur in the fall of 2025.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

(HQ-F23-042)

PROPOSAL 174

5 AAC 92.540. Controlled use areas.

Change the boundary of the Wood River Controlled Use Area in Unit 20A as follows:

Change the Western Boundary of the Wood River Controlled Use Area (WRCUA) to **"then along the Eastern bank of Dexter Creek to the confluence of All Gold Creek, then following a straight line to the intersection of the Totatlanika River and the established Ferry Trail, and then down the East Bank of the Totatlanika River to"** from "THEN ALONG THE EAST BANK OF DEXTER CREEK TO THE TOTATLANIKA RIVER, AND THEN DOWN THE EAST BANK OF THE TOTATLANIKA RIVER".

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Modify the Wood River Controlled Use Area (WRCUA) boundary line for a portion of the Totatlanika River boundary line. The specific area is the portion that lies between Dexter Creek and the Ferry Trail intersection along the Totatlanika River. This portion of the Totatlanika River has established mining trails that weave from bank to bank of the river, some of which cross the current boundary for the WRCUA. Hunters have been cited for crossing the boundary line while on the established mining trails along the river and unnecessary trails are being created across the nearby marshy tundra to avoid such citations. This change will minimally impact the usable portion of the WRCUA and simply serve to facilitate travel along existing trails as well as minimize impact on the landscape from unnecessary trail creation/use.

PROPOSED BY: Middle Nenana River Advisory Committee

(EG-F23-272)

PROPOSAL 175

5 AAC 92.540. Controlled use areas.

Change the boundary of the Wood River Controlled Use Area in Unit 20A as follows:

Change the boundary of the Wood River Controlled Use Area (WRCUA) to: "then along the Eastern bank of Dexter Creek to [THE TOTATLANIKA RIVER] **the confluence of All Gold Creek, then following a straight line to Murphy Peak, then following a straight line to the intersection of the Totatlanika River and the Ferry Trail,** and then down the east bank of the Totatlanika River to the Rex Trail.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Wood River Controlled Use Area (WRCUA) has as a portion of its boundary the Totatlanika River, from its headwaters at All Gold and Dexter Creeks to where it meets the Ferry Trail. That area has established mining trails that have been in constant use for 100 years or so. Over the years, the river's course has changed and portions of the trail cross the river at various points, creating confusion for hunters and leading to tickets. The only alternatives for hunters are 1) to create new routes across the tundra, which is pretty hard on the tundra or 2) drive up the river, which could negatively impact the stream habitat. Please consider modifying the boundary of the WRCUA. This change would have minimal impact on the WRCUA as a whole, but would provide clarity and protect the surrounding environment by using existing trails.

PROPOSED BY: Joseph Kurber

(EG-F23-258)

PROPOSAL 176

5 AAC 85.045. Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

Reduce the nonresident moose bag limit in portions of Unit 20B, and eliminate nonresident moose hunting opportunity in portions of Unit 20B as follows:

Change nonresident any-bull moose hunts for nonresidents in Unit 20B drainage of the Middle (East) Fork of the Chena River, and Unit 20B Salcha River drainage upstream from and including Goose Creek, to one bull with 50-inch antlers, or antlers with four or more brow tines on at least one side.

Change nonresident any-bull moose hunts in Unit 20B within Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge, and Unit 20B remainder of Fairbanks Management Area, to one bull with 50-inch antlers, or antlers with four or more brow tines on at least one side. Remove opportunity for nonresidents to harvest antlerless moose

All resident bag limits and seasons remain the same.

5AAC 85.045 Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

Unit 20B drainage of the Middle Fork of the Chena River, and Unit 20B that portion of the Salcha River drainage upstream from and including Goose Creek:

**One bull with 50-inch antlers,
or antlers with 4 or more brow
tines on at least one side** [ONE BULL]

Nonresidents
Sept 1 – Sept 25

**One bull with 50-inch antlers,
or antlers with 4 or more brow
tines on at least one side** [ONE BULL]
by bow and arrow only

Sept 26 – Sept 30

Unit 20B within Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge:

**One bull with 50-inch antlers,
or antlers with 4 or more brow
tines on at least one side** [ONE BULL
WITH SPIKE FORK OR GREATER
ANTLERS] *by bow and arrow only*

Nonresidents
Sept 1 – Sept 30
Nov 21 – Nov 27

OR

One antlerless moose *by bow and arrow only*
by permit DM 786/788

No open season [SEPT 1 – NOV 27]

OR

One antlerless moose *by muzzleloader only*
by permit DM 789

No open season [DEC 1 – JAN 31]

Unit 20B remainder of Fairbanks Management Area:

One bull with 50-inch antlers,
or antlers with 4 or more brow
tines on at least one side [ONE BULL
WITH SPIKE FORK OR GREATER
ANTLERS] *by bow and arrow only*

Nonresidents
Sept 1 – Sept 30
Nov 21 – Nov 27

OR

One antlerless moose *by bow and arrow only*
by permit DM 786/788

No open season [SEPT 1 – NOV 27]

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?

Nonresident opportunities for antlerless and any-bull moose hunts.

Any-bull moose hunts are coveted by resident Alaskans who want to put meat in their freezer and feed their families. Not having to judge the antlers on a bull moose, and being able to take younger bulls, prevents sub-legal harvests and ensures a higher success rate. Over-the-counter any-bull moose hunts, such as the ones in Unit 20B, are especially helpful to residents.

The taking of cows under antlerless hunts is designed to be a resident-only opportunity to put meat in the freezer under our Intensive Management law.

We do not believe the state should allow nonresidents to participate in any-bull or antlerless moose hunts in the interior, whether by over-the-counter or draw permits. These types of hunts are “meat” hunts designed to provide more opportunity for Alaskans to put food on the table. Most nonresident moose hunters are not hunting to put food in their freezers, and there are plenty of nonresident over-the-counter moose hunting opportunities in the interior and statewide for bulls with antler restrictions.

PROPOSED BY: Resident Hunters of Alaska

(HQ-F23-018)

PROPOSAL 177

5 AAC 85.045. Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

Extend the current moose season in Unit 20B Remainder by five days for certified bowhunters only as follows:

Unit 20B, remainder

Residents only

Bag limit: One bull

Season dates: Sept 1 – Sept 15

OR

ONE BULL BY BOW AND ARROW:

SEPT 16 – SEPT 20

Unit 20B, remainder

Nonresidents

Bag limit: One bull with 50-inch antlers or antlers with four or more brow tines on at least one side.

Season dates: Sept 5 – Sept 15

OR

ONE BULL WITH 50-INCH ANTLERS OR ANTLERS WITH 4 OR MORE BROW TINES ON AT LEAST ONE SIDE BY BOW AND ARROW:

SEPT 16 - SEPT 20

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? An additional five days for bowhunters in Unit 20B remainder would afford much greater hunting opportunity while at the same time keeping the impact on the resource to a minimum. There are already two areas within Unit 20B that have an additional five day season for bowhunters which extends from September 26 - September 30.

PROPOSED BY: Alaskan Bowhunters Association

(EG-F23-289)

PROPOSAL 178

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

Reauthorize the antlerless moose seasons in Unit 20B as follows:

Units and Bag Limits (18)	Resident Open Season Subsistence and General Hunts	Nonresident Open Season
...		
Unit 20(B), that portion within Creamer's refuge		
...		
1 antlerless moose by bow and arrow only, by drawing permit only; up to 150 bow and arrow permits may be issued in the Fairbanks Management Area; a recipient of a drawing permit is prohibited from taking an antlered bull moose in the Fairbanks Management Area; or	Sept. 1–Nov. 27	Sept. 1–Nov. 27
1 antlerless moose by muzzle-loader by drawing permit only; up to 10 permits may be issued; a recipient of a drawing permit is prohibited from taking an antlered bull moose in the Fairbanks Management Area	Dec. 1–Jan. 31	Dec. 1–Jan. 31
Unit 20(B), remainder of the Fairbanks Management Area		
...		
1 antlerless moose by bow and arrow only, by drawing permit only; up to 150 bow and arrow permits may be issued in the Fairbanks Management Area; a recipient of a drawing permit is prohibited from taking an antlered bull moose in the Fairbanks Management Area; or	Sept. 1–Nov. 27	Sept. 1–Nov. 27

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season Subsistence and General Hunts	Nonresident Open Season
1 moose by targeted permit only; up to 100 permits may be issued	Season to be announced by emergency order	No open season.
Unit 20(B), that portion within the Minto Flats Management Area		
RESIDENT HUNTERS:		
...		
1 antlerless moose by registration permit only	Oct. 15–Feb. 28	No open season.
...		
Unit 20(B), the drainage of the Middle Fork of the Chena River		
1 antlerless moose by drawing permit only; up to 300 permits may be issued; a person may not take a cow accompanied by a calf; or	Aug. 15–Nov. 15	
1 antlerless moose by registration permit only; a person may not take a cow accompanied by a calf; or	Oct. 1–Feb. 28	No open season.
...		
Unit 20(B), that portion southeast of the Moose Creek dike within one-half mile of each side of the Richardson highway		
...		
1 moose by drawing permit only; by crossbow, bow and arrow, or muzzleloader only; up to 100 permits may be issued; or	Sept. 16–Last day of Feb.	No open season.
1 moose by targeted permit only; by crossbow, shotgun, or bow and arrow only; up to 100 permits may be issued	Season to be announced by emergency order	No open season.

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season Subsistence and General Hunts	Nonresident Open Season
Remainder of Unit 20(B)		
1 antlerless moose by drawing permit only; by youth hunt only; up to 200 permits may be issued; or	Aug. 5–Aug. 14	No open season
...		
1 antlerless moose by drawing permit only; up to 1,500 permits may be issued in the remainder of Unit 20(B); a person may not take a cow accompanied by a calf; or	Aug. 15–Nov. 15	No open season.
1 antlerless moose by registration permit only; a person may not take a cow accompanied by a calf; or	Oct. 1– Last day of Feb.	
1 moose by targeted permit only; by crossbow, shotgun, or bow and arrow only; up to 100 permits may be issued	Season to be announced by emergency order	No open season.
...		

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Antlerless moose hunting seasons must be reauthorized annually. The goal is to provide for a wide range of public uses and benefits, and to protect the health and habitat of moose populations. Antlerless hunts are important for improving or maintaining the ability of moose habitat to support current populations. They also help regulate moose population growth, help to meet Intensive Management (IM) objectives for high levels of harvest, and provide subsistence hunters with a reasonable opportunity to pursue moose for subsistence uses without reducing bull:cow ratios.

If antlerless moose hunts are not reauthorized, the moose population may exceed population objectives causing habitat degradation and a loss of opportunity to hunt a surplus of antlerless moose. The reauthorization of antlerless moose hunts in Unit 20B will allow Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) to manage the moose population within the population objectives of 12,000 to 15,000 moose. Hunting opportunity and harvest will increase, and antlerless hunts allow ADF&G to manage this moose population at optimum levels. The additional harvest is necessary to meet intensive management harvest objectives while maintaining bull:cow ratios within objectives. Moose populations will benefit by maintaining moose densities at levels compatible with their habitat. Motorists and residents may benefit from reduced moose–vehicle collisions and moose–human conflicts.

The moose population level in Unit 20B is currently within the population objective of 12,000–15,000 moose. The population declined from an estimated 20,173 moose in 2009 to 11,064 in 2015, due in large part to antlerless moose hunts designed to lower the population to those objectives. The population increased slightly to 12,871 moose in 2017 and was estimated at 12,479 in 2020. A population estimate in Unit 20B has not been completed since the winter of 2022 which likely cause reduced survival of moose due to deep snow and rain on snow events. The department suggests that antlerless hunts should be limited until we can evaluate this population. The department recommends limited antlerless hunts in the Fairbanks Management Area (FMA) and the Richardson Highway corridor hunt. The department will continue to monitor the moose population and may implement additional antlerless hunts in the future if the population can sustain the harvest.

Fairbanks Management Area (FMA)—The purpose of this antlerless hunt is to regulate population growth in the FMA and reduce potential moose–vehicle collisions and nuisance moose problems.

The number of moose–vehicle collisions in the FMA is high and pose significant safety risks to motorists. In addition, moose nuisance issues continue to place significant demands on property owners. To increase hunting opportunity and harvest and reduce moose–vehicle collisions, the department incrementally increased the number of drawing permits for antlerless moose in the FMA during RY99–RY10. Moose–vehicle collisions and moose nuisance problems have remained low since, presumably, in part due to consistent antlerless moose harvests.

Richardson Highway Corridor Hunt—This hunt is an “any” moose drawing permit that allows hunters to hunt within a half mile of each side of the Richardson Highway. The purpose of this hunt is to allow hunters to harvest moose along the Richardson Highway to help reduce moose-vehicle collisions.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F23-043)

PROPOSAL 179

5 AAC 85.045. Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

Shift the moose season dates in Unit 20B as follows:

Move season for residents to Sept 15th - 30th.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? It is becoming more difficult to keep game fresh in early September. Temperatures have changed since the 1980’s. There used to be cooler temps and ice, now many hunting days reach 60 degrees or more during hunting season.

PROPOSED BY: Alan Horstman (EG-F23-168)

PROPOSAL 180

5 AAC 85.025. Hunting seasons and bag limits for caribou.

5 AAC 92.069. Special provisions for moose and caribou drawing permit hunts.

Change the allocation of permits for Delta caribou hunt DC827 in Unit 20A as follows:

Rescind action taken by the board on Proposal 146 in 2020 that guaranteed nonresident allocation of 25% of all DC827 permits.

OR

Establish an allocation of DC827 permits whereby residents receive 90% of the permits and nonresidents up to 10 percent of the permits.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?

DC 827 permit allocation to nonresidents

At the 2020 Interior and Eastern Arctic Region meeting, the Board of Game deliberated on Proposal 146, which requested that the allocation for the DC827 caribou hunt be set to a firm 90/10 resident/nonresident allocation. We brought up that hunt bookers were flooding the permit pool with application and as it was an open draw for all that nonresidents were now getting 25% of the permits.

The board amended Proposal 146 to completely change it 180 degrees, to permanently grant nonresidents 25 percent of the DC827 permits, which passed and became regulation.

Subsequently a request was sent to the Board of Game referring to the Board of Fisheries policy that prohibits amendments to proposals that completely change the intent, asking the board to institute that same policy. These kind of amendments that change a proposal from the complete opposite of what was intended should not be allowed. The board voted not to adopt such a policy.

What the board did in 2020 with Proposal 146 was wrong. The issues we still have with hunt bookers flooding the application pools continues for other permit hunts that are open to both residents and nonresidents equally.

Any draw-permit hunt in the state, no matter what species, is based on there not being enough animals for everyone to have the opportunity to hunt. Every draw permit in the state should have a 90/10 resident/nonresident percentage allocation and provide a clear priority for Alaskan hunters.

PROPOSED BY: Resident Hunters of Alaska

(HQ-F23-013)

PROPOSAL 181

5 AAC 85. 055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep.

Limit nonresident sheep hunting in Unit 20A by drawing permit only as follows:

Limit nonresident sheep hunters in Unit 20A to draw only permits with a limited allocation of up to 20 permits.

Unit 20 Remainder Nonresident Hunters

**One ram with full curl horn or larger
by drawing permit only, every four
regulatory years; up to 20 permits may be issued**

Aug 10 – Sept 20

[ONE RAM WITH FULL CURL HORNS
OR LARGER EVERY FOUR REGULATORY YEARS]

We understand that the board and the department may want higher “up to” language so when/if the sheep population increases the number of permits can increase. At this time, however, considering the declining sheep population in Unit 20A and the extremely low recruitment, we do not believe nonresidents should receive more than 20 permits.

Alternatively, the board has in the past set regulations for sheep hunting that only offer hunting opportunity when there is a certain amount of estimated harvestable surplus. So, if for example the estimated harvestable surplus of sheep in Unit 20A was 50 legal rams, the board could, under a nonresident draw permit system, allocate a percentage of the harvestable surplus to nonresidents.

We would support allocating 25% of the estimated harvestable surplus to nonresidents under such a system, which would look like this:

Unit 20 Remainder Nonresident Hunters

**One ram with full curl horn or larger
by drawing permit only, every four
regulatory years; the number of permits
issued is up to 25 percent of the estimated
harvestable surplus**

Aug 10 – Sept 20

[ONE RAM WITH FULL CURL HORN
OR LARGER EVERY FOUR REGULATORY YEARS]

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?

- Conservation concerns for the declining sheep population in Unit 20A.
- Continued unlimited nonresident sheep hunting opportunity in Unit 20A
- Nonresident sheep hunters taking majority of the harvest in Unit 20A

- Crowding and conflicts with unlimited nonresident sheep hunting opportunity in Unit 20A
- Concerns residents could lose general sheep hunting opportunity in Unit 20A.
- Questions on whether FC harvest management is always sustainable.

At the 2023 Southcentral Region meeting in Soldotna, the Board of Game spent considerable time deliberating board-generated Proposal 204 to completely close sheep hunting in Unit 19C for five years, based on conservation concerns the board had for that declining sheep population.

The department opposed Proposal 204, saying that while they were concerned with the recent sheep population declines, they had no conservation concerns for the sheep population because full-curl management (FCM) was sustainable under all conditions. Hunting was not the cause of sheep declines, they said, and any hunting restrictions would not help the sheep rebound faster.

The board, however, questioned the department's position on FCM harvest sustainability, based on recommendations the department made in the past to restrict sheep hunting in other areas that allowed unlimited hunting opportunity. For example, the department used an Emergency Order in 2014 to close all sheep hunting in Unit 23, and recommended that the board completely close Unit 23 to all sheep hunting in 2015, based on conservation concerns for the sheep population.

Unit 23 is still closed to all state sheep hunts, even though the sheep population there is much higher than in other areas, like the Kenai Peninsula, where the Department opposes any sheep hunting restrictions.

Department Position that Unlimited Sheep Hunting Opportunity under FC Harvest Management is Sustainable Doesn't Add Up

Here is part of the Department's statement and justification for closing Unit 23 to all sheep hunting in 2014¹: *"This emergency order closes all sheep seasons in Game Management Units 23 and 26(A) for all resident and nonresident hunters due to severe decline in sheep numbers in the contiguous populations of the DeLong Mountains and Schwatka Mountains.*

Sheep populations in the western Brooks Range within Units 23 and 26(A) experienced severe winter conditions in 2013-2014. Starvation and loss of protective habitat resulting from ground-fast ice have contributed to increased declines of sheep populations in the De Long Mountains and Schwatka Mountains. Previous declines during 2009–2011, low reproductive potential, and poor lamb production over a multi-year period have significantly reduced the number of sheep in Units 23 and 26(A).

*The large decline in the overall population, the low numbers of rams in the population, and the apparent very low recruitment rate **all suggest that any level of harvest could be detrimental to the population, prolong the decline, and limit recovery.**"* [our emphasis]

This statement from the department on the Unit 23 sheep hunting closure is the exact opposite of what the department has been saying about other sheep populations in other areas (like Unit 19C and 20A) that are experiencing similar declines for similar reasons. For those areas, the department has stated that continued unlimited sheep hunting opportunity will **not** prolong the declines and will **not** limit recovery.

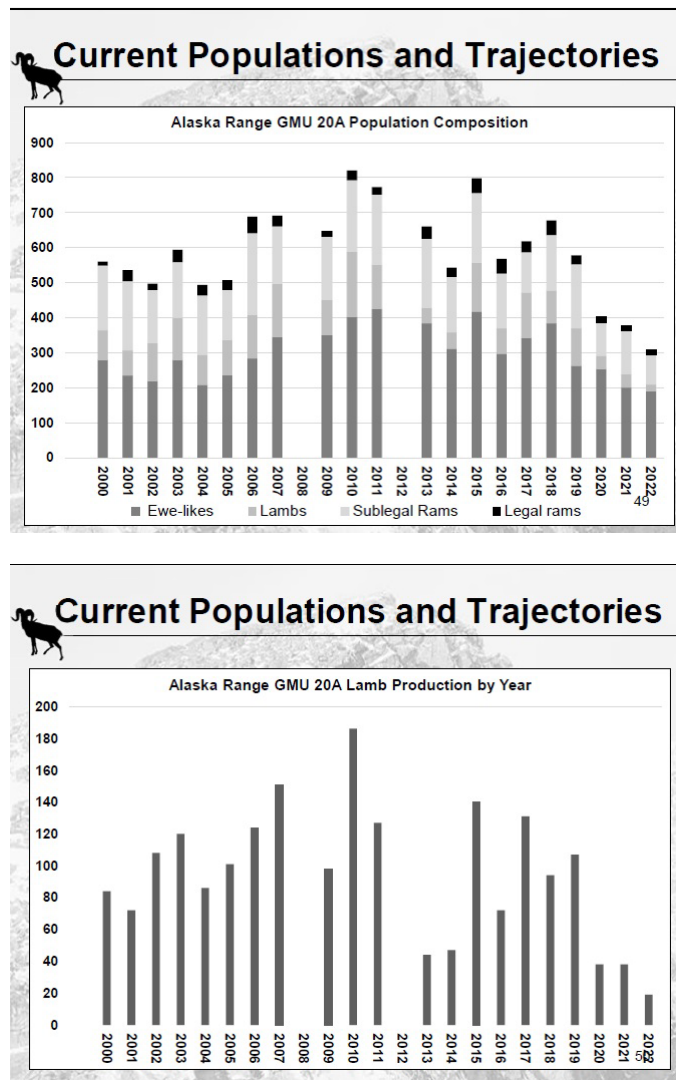
And What About the Sheep Hunting Restrictions in the Chugach Mountains?

A similar thing happened in the Chugach Mountains where maximum sheep hunting opportunity was allowed under FCM harvest, until the department suddenly had conservation concerns for that sheep population in 2008 and recommended hunting restrictions, which the board then passed and are still in place today.

These concrete examples of the department disagreeing with their own premise that unlimited sheep hunting opportunity under FCM harvest is always sustainable are why we believe that continued unlimited nonresident sheep hunting opportunity in Unit 20A needs to be curtailed and limited.

Below are sheep population and harvest data from the Department and further comments.

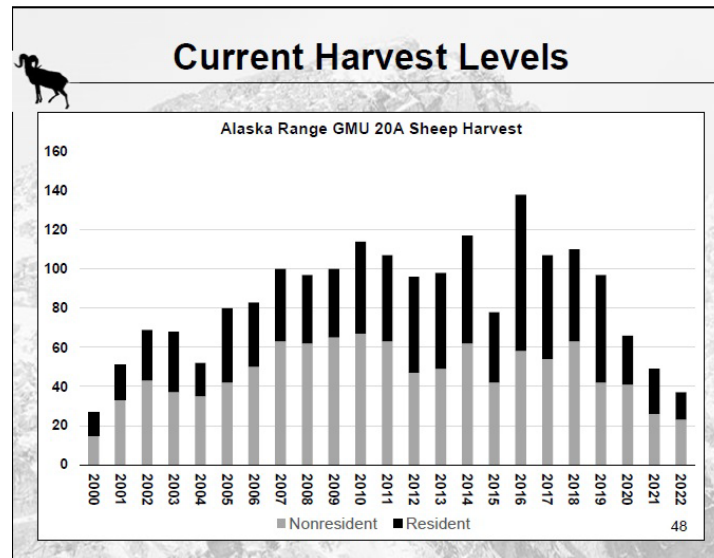
ADF&G 20A Sheep Population & Harvest Data:



Looking at the increased lamb production in 2015 and 2017 may lead one to believe that 2023 and 2025 will see better legal ram numbers, but information from the most recent 2022 trend count shows that recent severe winters have devastated those cohorts, as well as recruitment the past few years.

The low lamb recruitment the past three years in Unit 20A is as much a concern as the “*poor lamb production over a multi-year period*” that “*significantly reduced the number of sheep in Units 23 and 26(A)*” and led to the complete sheep hunting closure in those units.

The bottom line is that the near future for sheep in Unit 20A is grim.



Hunters consistently harvested 100 sheep from Unit 20A for over a decade, but consistent severe winters, late springs, predation and other factors led to steep population declines that became noticeable in the decreased harvest numbers starting in 2019.

Unit 20A Sheep Harvest Statistics from ADF&G (Last Five Years):

Year	Total Hunters	Resident Hunters	Nonres Hunters	Total Harvest	Nonres Harvest	Resident Harvest
2018	276	196	80	107	62	45
2019	249	183	66	89	40	48
2020	245	184	61	63	41	22
2021	179	134	45	44	26	18
2022	138	93	45	36	24	12

Average nonresident sheep harvest over last five years is 58%. **Nonresident hunters took 66% of the sheep harvest in 2022.**

Below are some quotes from the department memorandum with the results of the Unit 20A 2022 sheep survey:

“The number of observed lambs in 2020 and 2021 was the fewest ever seen in the survey area dating back to 1983. This 2022 survey was the third consecutive year of exceeding the poorest lamb crop on record.”

“The number of sheep observed on this survey was the lowest ever observed in this survey area. The low number of sheep during the 2020, 2021 and 2022 surveys (Table 1) are likely attributed to 3 consecutive hard winters which had deep snow and late breakup, both of which can lead to poor lamb survival. This may have also had a negative effect on adult sheep as well. We are also entering the time frame in which the poor cohorts of 2013 and 2014 may be shown in the low number of legal rams available.”

Again, this is comparable to the situation we had in Unit 23, yet somehow the department does not have any conservation concerns.

How can we trust the department not to eventually say they have conservation concerns for the sheep in Unit 20A and then recommend restrictions that once again fall on resident sheep hunters? It is past time for the board to put all nonresident sheep hunters in Unit 20A on draw-only hunts with a limited allocation to protect the sheep resource and protect resident sheep hunting opportunities.

¹<https://www.ADF&G.alaska.gov/static/applications/webintra/wcnews/2014/orders/05-06-14.pdf>

PROPOSED BY: Resident Hunters of Alaska (HQ-F23-019)

PROPOSAL 182

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

Lengthen the brown/grizzly bear season in Units 20A, 20B, and 25C for residents and nonresidents by two weeks to close on June 15 as follows:

Extend the brown bear season for residents and nonresidents in Units 20A, 20B, and 25C to June 15th.

5AAC 85.020 Hunting seasons and bag limits for brown bear

Unit 20(A) and Remainder of Unit 20(B)

Unit 20(B)

Unit 25(C)

One bear every regulatory year

Resident Nonresident

Sept 1 – [May 31} **June 15** Sept 1 – [May 31} **June 15**

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Grizzly bears usually show up to bear bait sites in early June. This causes a safety concern to bear hunters trying to fill their freezers with black bear meat, and a loss of opportunity to take a grizzly bear over bait. Grizzly bears are an ever-increasing occurrence in June in Units 20A, 20B, and 25C. Extending the grizzly bear season by 15 days should not pose any conservation concern.

PROPOSED BY: Fairbanks Fish and Game Advisory Committee (EG-F23-217)

PROPOSAL 183

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

Lengthen the brown/grizzly bear hunting season in Unit 20A by two weeks to close on June 15 as follows:

A solution would be simple and one that the public has been asking of the board for years. Extend grizzly season in Unit 20A until at a minimum of June 15th. This would align seasons more to other areas of Unit 20 as well where grizzly season has been permitted to stay open until June 30th. Similar changes in these other subunits of 20 that have allowed grizzly baiting later into June have proven to be effective without having an overall detriment to grizzly bear populations.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? In most of the Tanana Flats, grizzly's aren't moving out of the hills and becoming more apparent until late in May/June. For many hunters who bait in the flats, this becomes an issue as grizzlies take over bait stations, keeping black bears out of stations and limiting hunter success. Because of current season dates, hunters are unable to harvest grizzlies during this timeframe and help in reducing overall grizzly populations in the interior. Additionally because of this, hunters in the field are seeing an increasing abundance of grizzlies and fewer black bears as there have been traditionally in the Tanana Flats.

PROPOSED BY: Middle Nenana River Fish and Game Advisory Committee (EG-F23-314)

PROPOSAL 184

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

Lengthen the brown/grizzly bear hunting season in Unit 20A by three weeks to open August 10 as follows:

My solution is to change opening day of grizzly bear season in Unit 20A from September 1st to August 10th to coincide with sheep and caribou hunting seasons.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? I would like to propose grizzly bear season in Unit 20A open on August 10th rather than September 1st as many hunters are in the area hunting sheep and caribou at that time as well. From my personal experience, I have seen significant grizzly bear activity in the area while I am hunting. I would like to reduced the number of ewes, lambs and calves preyed upon during this time as well as feel safer as a hunter and have the opportunity to harvest the grizzly rather than dispatch for defense of life or property (DPL) and the subsequent measured needed following a DPL.

PROPOSED BY: Mylinda Cizmowski (EG-F23-234)

PROPOSAL 185

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

Extend the brown/grizzly bear hunting season in Unit 20A and Unit 20B Remainder to close on June 30, to align with the rest of Unit 20 as follows:

I believe the brown/grizzly season should be open until June 30th across all of Unit 20:

B 20A, 20B, 20C, 20F

One bear every regulatory year Sept 1-June 30

B 20E

Two bears every regulatory year Aug 10-June 30

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? There is a large and healthy population of brown/grizzly bears in Unit 20 and we need to have the ability to use this resource as well as help our moose and caribou populations through more lenient limitations on brown/grizzly hunting within all of Unit 20.

PROPOSED BY: Tyrel Palmer

(EG-F23-206)

PROPOSAL 186

5 AAC 92.510. Areas closed to hunting.

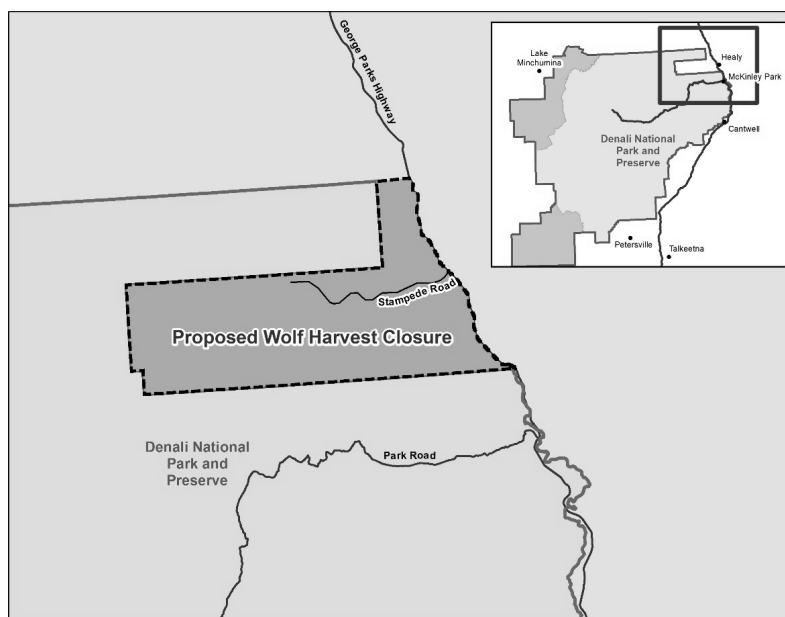
5 AAC 92.550. Areas closed to trapping.

Close a portion of Unit 20C to wolf hunting and trapping as follows:

PROPOSAL: 5 AAC 92.510. Areas closed to hunting; and 5 AAC 92.550. Areas closed to trapping.

Restore prohibition on the harvest of wolves in a portion of Unit 20C as follows:

Within Unit 20C; those portions of Uniform Coding Unit (UCU) 0607, 0605, and 0502 west of George Parks Highway and bounded by Denali National Park on three sides, is closed to the taking of wolves by hunting and by trapping.



What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?

ISSUE

In Alaska, wolves are among the most desired species for viewing (Shea & Tankersley 1991), and state wildlife management includes mandates to provide for multiple uses, including non- consumptive uses such as wildlife viewing (Alaska Department of Fish and Game 2006).

Wildlife viewing also brings an important socioeconomic benefit to the state of Alaska. Wildlife viewing activities in Alaska supported over \$2.7 billion dollars in economic activity in 2011 and 40% of visitors to Alaska reported hoping to view wild wolves during their visit (ECONorthwest 2014).

More than anywhere else in Alaska, wolves in the eastern region of Denali National Park (Denali) provide significant wolf viewing opportunities as visitors travel along the Park Road. Denali is recognized as one of the best places in the world for people to see wolves in the wild and several thousand park visitors may see wolves in a given year. In addition, viewing large carnivores, particularly wolves and grizzly bears, is a main indicator of a satisfying visitor experience in Denali National Park (Manning & Hallo 2010).

Wolf viewing opportunities in Denali are primarily provided by one to three packs of wolves that center their activity near the Denali Park Road during the summer months. Analysis of 14 years of data from the National Park Service (NPS) on wolves equipped with GPS radio collars shows that the same wolf packs that provide the majority of wolf sightings during the visitor season also show a pattern of use of areas just outside of the boundary of the park during the winter and spring. Harvest of wolves in this area has the potential to decrease wolf numbers, alter wolf behavior, and decrease opportunities for wolf viewing by park visitors. While wolf harvest just outside the northeastern boundary of the park may have little effect on regional wolf populations, it can have significant effects on wolf packs whose territories intersect the Park Road and on the experience of Denali's visitors.

Prior to the pandemic, over 400,000 people visited Denali annually (Fix, Ackerman & Fay 2012). The number of active trappers in the Stampede Corridor ranged from one to three in any given year (Alaska Department of Fish and Game 2013). The NPS recognizes the impact of the closure to the lifestyle and livelihood of these trappers may represent a significant trade-off.

WHAT SOLUTION DO YOU RECOMMEND?

Within Game Management Unit 20C; those portions of Uniform Coding Unit (UCU) 0607, 0605, and 0502 west of George Parks Highway and bounded by Denali National Park on three sides, is closed to the taking of wolves by hunting and trapping.

The proposed closure represents the most effective closure in terms of limiting harvest of wolves that primarily reside within the boundaries of the park and provide the majority of wolf sightings. Additionally, the extent of the closure will facilitate interpretation of the effects of the closure on wolf sightings.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF NOTHING IS DONE?

Wolves from the most commonly viewed packs will continue to be trapped and hunted just outside of park boundaries, in places as close as four miles from the park road. During periods when the harvest closure was in place, the probability of seeing a wolf from the Park Road was as high as 45%. Following the elimination of the harvest closure (2011 to 2019 - pre pandemic) the probability of seeing a park wolf ranged from 21% to 1%.

WILL THE QUALITY OF THE RESOURCE HARVESTED OR THE PRODUCTS PRODUCED BE IMPROVED?

This proposal would help to facilitate opportunities for Alaskans and others to see wolves along the Denali Park Road. It would have a small effect on the number of wolves harvested in the entirety of Unit 20C.

WHO IS LIKELY TO BENEFIT?

- Visitors who come to Alaska to see a diversity of wildlife (~ 400,000 annually).
- Tour operators and the Alaska tourism industry that promote and provide wildlife viewing tour products.

WHO IS LIKELY TO SUFFER?

Trappers and hunters who wish to harvest wolves in the area that we are proposing to close within the Stampede Corridor. This proposed change may impact the lifestyle or livelihood of trappers who use the area.

OTHER SOLUTIONS CONSIDERED?

Previous proposals in 2017 and 2020 considered a reduced spatial extent and duration for a wolf harvest closure in the area.

References

Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Alaska Department of Fish and Game Hunting and Trapping data. Fairbanks, AK; 2013

ECONorthwest 2014. The Economic Importance of Alaska's Wildlife in 2011: Summary Report, Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

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Manning, R. E., and J. C. Hallo. 2010. In Focus: Denali Park Road: The Denali Park Road experience: Indicators and standards of quality. Park Science 27(2):33–41.

Shea, L., & N. Tankersley. (1991). Wildlife watching and Alaska's tourism potential. Alaska's Wildlife. Alaska Department of Fish & Game. Juneau,23(2).

PROPOSED BY: Denali National Park and Preserve (HQ-F23-002)

Correction: The title for Proposal 187 incorrectly states the proposed change. The actual proposal asks to lengthen the wolverine trapping season in Unit 20C to March 31.

PROPOSAL 187

5 AAC 84.270. Furbearer trapping.

Lengthen the wolverine trapping season in Units 20A, 20B, 20D, and 20F by two weeks to align with 20C as follows:

Units 19, 20C, 21, 24, 25A, 25B, and 25D..... Nov 1 - Mar 31.....No limit

Units 20A, 20B, 20D, 20F, and 25C Nov 1 - Feb 28No limit

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? I would like to standardize the trapping season dates for wolverine in Unit 20C. Currently there is a small portion of the unit that has a much shorter trapping season than the remainder of the subunit. I would like to see the dates standardized to the longer season dates throughout. Sealing data indicates harvests of: 2017, 14 wolverine; 2018, 6 wolverine; 2019, 9 wolverine; 2020, 14 wolverine; and 2021, 15 wolverines harvested for all of Unit 20C. With Denali Park located in this subunit there is a significant land mass where trapping of wolverines is not allowed. So, it is unlikely that an overharvest would occur as a result of this change. Current wolf season in this unit run Nov. 1 – Apr. 30, lynx season in this area is Nov. 1- Mar. 15. It is possible for a wolverine to be caught in one of these sets, and the trapper would then need to turn it in as an incidental harvest.

PROPOSED BY: Raymond Heuer

(EG-F23-202)

PROPOSAL 188

5 AAC 84.270. Furbearer trapping.

5 AAC 92.095 Unlawful methods of taking furbearers; exceptions.

Open beaver trapping in a portion of Unit 20B as follows:

I recommend opening beaver trapping in Unit 20B in “that portion of the Chena River downstream from its confluence with the Little Chena River,” using underwater/under-ice sets from 1 November until 15 April. This would expand trapping opportunities and allow for a modest harvest of beavers while ice covers the river, thereby helping to control the beaver population in this portion of the Chena River while minimizing the possibility of unintentional harm to or conflict with boaters, pets, and other recreational users of this portion of the river.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Beaver trapping is currently closed in Unit 20B in “that portion of the Chena River downstream from its confluence with the Little Chena River,” presumably due to relatively high population density in this region relative to other areas of Unit 20B. There is a very high density of active beaver lodges in this area, and consequently, a significant amount of damage caused by beavers. This proposal opens up trapping opportunities while minimizing potential for conflict with other recreational users of the Chena River.

PROPOSED BY: Stephen Meyers

(EG-F23-165)
