

PROPOSAL 84 – 5 AAC 92.108. Identified big game prey populations and objectives. Raise the population objective for moose in Unit 16B as follows:

The Unit 16B moose population is most likely going to be estimated to be above the current population objective and will likely continue to grow further above since habitat is not limiting productivity and predators are no longer limiting population growth. It would be wise in my opinion to raise the moose population to reflect this reality.

The new moose population objective for Unit 16B should be 1.5–2 moose per square mile of available moose habitat or 10,000 to 13,000 moose.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The moose population objective for Unit 16B is well below carrying capacity. By the time this proposal is deliberated on in 2018 it will have been five years since ADF&G determined that the moose population was near the upper end of the current population objective of 6,500–7,500 moose or 1–1.2 moose per square mile of the approximately 6,500 square miles of moose habitat in the unit. The moose population estimate, if and when ADF&G conducts any new ones since the 2013 one done in the north (unless they do one in the south), will likely show that the moose population is above the objective using the new measured sightability correction factor. Twinning rates have remained high, around 50%, since 2013 at the same time the moose population was estimated to be near the upper end of the objective, indicating that the habitat can support more moose than 7,500 new count. Since the population has likely grown beyond 7,500 since 2013 and twinning rates have remained steady, it indicates that a population above 7,500 moose is not habitat limited. If you live here and see the amount of willow that remains untouched during winter, you might surmise that winter range is not limiting the moose population. According to ADF&G estimates, Unit 16B south has been at 1.5 moose per square mile of available moose habitat since 2010. This indicates that 1.5 moose per square mile would make a fine lower objective for the unit. The Unit 16A moose population objective is roughly 2.2 to 2.6 moose per square mile. If Unit 16A can support 2.2 moose per square mile, I think it reasonable to assume Unit 16B can support two moose per square mile of available habitat.

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