

PROPOSAL 47

5 AAC 85.035. Hunting seasons and bag limits for elk.

Eliminate the general season elk hunt in Units 1–3 as follows:

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
[UNITS 1, 2, AND REMAINDER OF UNIT 3.]		
[1 ELK]	[AUG. 1—DEC. 31]	[AUG.1—DEC. 31]
<u>Units 1, 2, and the remainder of Unit 3</u>	<u>No open season.</u>	<u>No open season.</u>

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? In 1987, 33 Roosevelt and 17 Rocky Mountain elk were successfully transplanted from Oregon to Etolin Island in Unit 3. Due to concerns about the potential for disease transmission and interspecific competition with native Sitka black-tailed deer, the Department of Fish and Game’s (department) elk management plan called for restricting the distribution of introduced elk to Etolin Island. Despite a desire to restrict elk to Etolin Island, not long after the initial release a group of elk swam to and colonized neighboring Zarembo Island. At the time, a decision was made to allow elk to occupy both Etolin and Zarembo islands.

To prevent dispersal of introduced elk from the Etolin and Zarembo island complex to other parts of the region, in 2000, the Board of Game (board) authorized a general season elk hunt (August 1 – December 31, one elk) for elk that dispersed outside of the Etolin and Zarembo island complex. While the department occasionally receives reports of elk having been harvested outside of the Etolin and Zarembo island complex, none of the reported kill locations has ever been verified. And while the department occasionally receives reports of elk having been observed or heard on other islands in Unit 3 and Unit 2, and on the Unit 1 mainland, none of these reports have been verified and no elk harvest has been reported outside the bounds of Unit 3.

The department believes that the general season hunt for elk outside of the Etolin and Zarembo island complex is being abused to facilitate taking elk from Etolin and Zarembo islands outside the current bull-only drawing and registration permit hunts. In the 31 years since elk were introduced to Etolin Island and soon after occupied adjacent Zarembo Island, elk have not established additional populations. Consequently, the department is now less concerned that introduced elk will colonize other areas of Southeast Alaska and potentially transmit diseases or parasites or compete with native deer.

This proposal rescinds the general season elk hunt in Units 1, 2, and the remainder of Unit 3. The department believes this change will have little effect on hunter opportunity because we have

never been able to verify that an elk was lawfully harvested under this hunt. Should the presence of elk be confirmed outside the Etolin and Zarembo island complex, and should it remain desirable to limit the distribution of elk to those islands, the department will propose a new registration hunt.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

(HQ-F18-048)
