

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
STAFF COMMENTS FOR PROPSALS 60-62, 69-71, 85, 88-92, 127, 128, 130, and 150
SOUTHCENTRAL REGION PROPOSALS
ALASKA BOARD OF GAME MEETING
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA
MARCH 14-19, 2019



The following staff comments were prepared by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game for use at the Alaska Board of Game meeting, March 14-19, 2019 in Anchorage, Alaska, and are prepared to assist the public and board. The stated staff comments should be considered preliminary and subject to change, if or when new information becomes available. Final department positions will be formulated after review of written and oral testimony presented to the board.

PROPOSAL 60 – 5 AAC 85.040(3). Hunting seasons and bag limits for goat

PROPOSED BY: Dave Lyon

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would adjust the season dates for draw and registration mountain goat hunts on the Kenai Peninsula.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The current regulations as defined in 5 AAC 5 AAC 85.040(3) are:

| | |
|--|----------------------------|
| Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts) | Nonresident Open Season |
|--|----------------------------|

Units and Bag Limits

(3)

Unit 15(C), that portion beginning at the mouth of Jakolof Creek, then southwesterly along the shore of Kachemak Bay to the mouth of the Port Graham River, then southeasterly up the Port Graham River approximately 6 miles, then southerly up the south fork to the divide, then easterly across the divide to the main drainage that flows into Windy Bay, then southeasterly down the Creek to Windy Bay, then easterly along the shoreline to the mouth of Rocky River, then northerly up the Rocky River and Windy River to the divide separating Windy River from Jakolof Creek, then across that divide to Jakolof Creek, then

down Jakolof Creek to the point of origin

1 goat by registration permit only; the taking of nannies with kids is prohibited

Aug. 10–Oct. 15
Nov. 1–Nov. 30

No open season

Unit 15(C), that portion beginning; at the mouth of the Port Graham River, then southeasterly up the Port Graham River approximately 6 miles, then southerly up the south fork to the divide, then easterly across the divide to the main drainage that flows into Windy Bay, then southeasterly down the Creek to Windy Bay, then along the southern shore of Windy Bay, then westerly along the shore of the Gulf of Alaska and around the tip of the Kenai Peninsula and easterly to the point of origin

1 goat by registration permit only; the taking of nannies with kids is prohibited

Aug. 10–Oct. 15
Nov. 1–Nov. 30

Aug. 10–Oct. 15
No open season

Unit 7 and Remainder
Of Unit 15

1 goat by drawing permit only in the Aug. 10–Oct. 15 season (up to 500 permits will be issued), or 1 goat by registration

Aug. 10–Oct. 15
(General hunt only)
Nov. 1–Nov. 30

Aug. 10–Oct. 15
Nov. 1–Nov. 30

(General hunt only)

permit only in the
Nov. 1–Nov. 30 season;
however, if a nanny is taken
in either season, the hunter
is prohibited from taking a
goat on the Kenai Peninsula
for 5 regulatory years; the
taking of nannies with kids
is prohibited

...

A positive customary and traditional use finding exists for mountain goats in Units 7 and 15 outside the Anchorage-Matsu-Kenai Nonsubsistence Area; with opportunities provided in registration hunt areas 364 (Seldovia) and 365 (Port Graham/Nanwalek). The board has established an amount reasonably necessary for subsistence uses outside the nonsubsistence area as 7-10 goats.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Kenai Peninsula draw season goat hunt dates would be shorter by 15 days, from Aug 10–Sep. 30; late season registration hunt dates in draw areas would be shortened by 15 days, Oct. 10–Oct. 24, and the season shifted forward by 28 days; and fall registration season dates in hunt areas RG 364 and RG 365 would be shortened by 15 days to Aug 10–Sep. 30 while late season dates would be shortened by 15 days with new season dates of Oct. 10–Oct. 24 and the season shifted forward by 28 days.

BACKGROUND: The overall population trend for mountain goats on the Kenai Peninsula is increasing. Some units on the road system that experience high winter recreational use and high nanny harvest continue to remain at minimal numbers. Mountain goats are managed on a point system of 1 point for each billy harvested and 2 points for each nanny harvested. Points available in each unit are based on the most recent minimum count values, with points for easily accessed units calculated at 4% of the count and less accessible units calculated at 5% of the most recent minimum count. Late season registration hunts are only opened if harvest opportunity still exists after the early season draw and registration hunts. The majority (91%) of mountain goat harvest in the last 10 years occurred in the early season for both draw and registration units. Of the early season harvest, 76% occurred before September 30.

Weather is a significant factor in harvest timing and hunt success. Access to outer coastal hunt areas becomes more difficult later in the season as fall storm frequency increases. Approximately 25% of Kenai mountain goat hunters use commercial transporters to gain access to hunting areas, usually via air taxi. Local air taxi services generally operate on a final pickup date of October 1 for outer coast hunt units on the Kenai Peninsula.

Annual reported goat harvests by the 3 communities within the Unit 15C subsistence area (Seldovia, Port Graham, and Nanwalek) averaged 1.5 goats annually for the three communities combined (available data, 1977-2018). Of 52 total goat harvests reported by the 3 communities (from 1977-2018), 3 (6%) occurred between October 1 and October 9.

The shifting of harvest dates would move the late season registration hunts outside of the rut and more closely align the season dates with Unit 14A. Mountain goat hide quality is typically good by the second week of September.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is NEUTRAL on this proposal.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 61 – 5 AAC 85.040(3). Hunting seasons and bag limits for goat.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Establish a new resident-only drawing hunt for goats near Seldovia in Unit 15C.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The current regulations as defined in 5 AAC 5 AAC 85.040(3) are:

| Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts) | Nonresident Season | Open |
|--|-----------------------|------|
|--|-----------------------|------|

Units and Bag Limits
(3)
Unit 15(C), that portion beginning at the mouth of Jakolof Creek, then southwesterly along the shore of Kachemak Bay to the mouth of the Port Graham River, then southeasterly up the Port Graham River approximately 6 miles, then southerly up the south fork to the divide, then easterly across the divide to the main drainage that flows into Windy Bay, then southeasterly down the

creek to Windy Bay, then easterly along the shoreline to the mouth of Rocky River, then northerly up the Rocky River and Windy River to the divide separating Windy River from Jakolof Creek, then across that divide to Jakolof Creek then down Jakolof Creek to the point of origin

1 goat by registration permit Aug. 10-Oct. 15 No open season only; the taking of nannies with Nov. 1-Nov. 30 kids is prohibited

A positive customary and traditional use finding exists for mountain goats in Units 7 and 15 outside the Anchorage-Matsu-Kenai Nonsubsistence Area, with opportunities provided in registration hunt areas 364 (Seldovia) and 365 (Port Graham/Nanwalek). The board has established an amount reasonably necessary for subsistence uses outside the nonsubsistence area as 7-10 goats.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED?

This proposal would establish a resident-only drawing hunt in the Seldovia hunt area (RG364) with season dates of Aug. 10–Oct. 15. Drawing permits will be offered in years when the minimum count for the area would allow for additional harvest above the existing harvest opportunity provided in the registration permit.

BACKGROUND: The population trend for mountain goats in RG364 is increasing. Mountain goats are managed on a point system of 1 point for each billy harvested and 2 points for each nanny harvested. Points available for RG364 are calculated at 5% of the most recent minimum count. The late season hunt is only opened if harvest opportunity still exists after the early season harvest is complete. Harvest opportunity has been under-utilized in this area since 2010, with an average of 4 goat points per year going unused. The majority of harvest for this area occurs in the early registration season. The late season hunt has been opened the last 4 years with only 2 goats harvested (Table 61.1). Weather is a significant factor in harvest timing and hunt success. Access to the outer coast portion of the hunt area becomes more difficult later in the season as fall storm frequency increases.

Table 61.1 RG364 Harvest Chronology and Alaska residency.

| Year | Early Harvest | Late Harvest | Total | Seldovia Resident | Alaska Resident |
|----------------|----------------------|---------------------|--------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| 2009 | 5 | 0 | 5 | 3 | 2 |
| 2010 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 2011 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 2012 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| 2013 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 3 |
| 2014 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| 2015 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2016 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2017 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| 2018 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 2 |
| Average | 2.6 | 0.2 | 2.8 | 1.7 | 1.1 |

Note: both late season harvests were conducted by residents of other Alaska communities, not Seldovia residents.

Early season permit numbers have steadily increased as opportunity has increased: from 10 permits in 2012 to 24 permits in 2018. Harvest has not increased with increased harvest opportunity under the current hunt structure. When the current hunt structure was established in 2007 (it was previously a Tier II hunt), permits were set for distribution on August 1 from Seldovia on a first come-first served basis, and 10 permits were distributed. At that time, 80% of permit holders participated in the hunt. Only 22% of permit holders have participated in this hunt since hunt establishment, compared to 49% participation across the Kenai Peninsula during the same time period. Starting in 2013, when permit numbers were increased, left over permits have been available after the original distribution date. This has led to some inconsistencies in how left over permits are distributed. Currently left over permits are held for distribution by the Seldovia harbormaster on a first come-first served basis. Hunt managers do not support raising registration permits numbers above current levels due to the high possibility of overharvest should participation increase in any given year.

Seldovia residents have held 54% of the permits for RG364 since hunt establishment and have harvested 64% of the animals.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is NEUTRAL on this proposal and SUPPORTS additional harvest opportunity.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 62 – 5 AAC 85.040(3). Hunting seasons and bag limits for goat.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Separate the early and late season registration goat hunts for the Seldovia (RG364) and Port Graham/Nanwalek (RG365) hunt areas.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The current regulations as defined in 5 AAC 5 AAC 85.040(3) are:

| Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts) | Nonresident Open Season |
|---|----------------------------|
|---|----------------------------|

Units and Bag Limits

(3)

Unit 15(C), that portion beginning at the mouth of Jakolof Creek, then southwesterly along the shore of Kachemak Bay to the mouth of the Port Graham River, then southeasterly up the Port Graham River approximately 6 miles, then southerly up the south fork to the divide, then easterly across the divide to the main drainage that flows into Windy Bay, then southeasterly down the creek to Windy Bay, then easterly along the shoreline to the mouth of Rocky River, then northerly up the Rocky River and Windy River to the divide separating Windy River from Jakolof Creek, then across that divide to Jakolof Creek, then down Jakolof Creek to the point of origin

| | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| 1 goat by registration permit only; the taking of nannies with kids is prohibited | Aug. 10–Oct. 15 Nov. 1–Nov. 30 | No open season |
|---|-----------------------------------|----------------|

Unit 15(C), that portion beginning; at the mouth of the Port Graham River, then southeasterly up the Port Graham River approximately 6 miles, then southerly up the south fork to the divide, then easterly across the divide to the main drainage that flows into Windy Bay, then southeasterly down the creek to Windy Bay, then along the southern shore of Windy Bay, then westerly along the shore of the Gulf of Alaska and around the tip of the Kenai Peninsula and easterly to the point of origin

| | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 goat by registration permit only; the taking of nannies with kids is prohibited | Aug. 10–Oct. 15 Nov. 1–Nov. 30 | Aug. 10–Oct. 15 No open season |
|---|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|

A positive customary and traditional use finding exists for mountain goats in Units 7 and 15 outside the Anchorage-Matsu-Kenai Nonsubsistence Area, with opportunity provided through registration hunt areas 364 (Seldovia) and 365 (Port Graham/Nanwalek). The board has established an amount reasonably necessary for subsistence uses outside the nonsubsistence area as 7-10 goats.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED?

This proposal would separate the early and late season registration goat hunts for the Seldovia and Port Graham/Nanwalek hunt areas such that the early season hunt in Seldovia would retain the RG364 hunt number and the late season would be administered under a new hunt number; the early season hunt in Port Graham/Nanwalek would be administered under the RG365 hunt number and the late season under a new hunt number. The proposal would also allow the

distribution of permits in RG364 in the management year prior to the permit management year (i.e. 2019 permits could be issued in June of 2019).

BACKGROUND: The current permit system makes administration of RG364 and RG365 difficult. Early versus late season harvest is not properly tracked in the state electronic system using harvest reports and errors in late season permit distribution under the state’s electronic system have occurred due to identical hunt numbers for separate hunts. Additionally, in 2017 the Seldovia Advisory Committee requested that the permit distribution date be changed for RG364. The distribution dates requested by the community fall outside the permit's management year. Seldovia residents have held 54% of the permits for RG364 since hunt establishment and have harvested 64% of the animals.

The current hunt structure for RG364 and RG365 was established by the board in 2007. Since then, permits have been distributed from the communities beginning on the dates requested by the community. The original permit distribution date was established as August 1 and the current distribution date is the second Wednesday in July.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is NEUTRAL on this proposal.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 69 – 5 AAC 85.045 Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

PROPOSED BY: Central Peninsula Fish and Game Advisory Committee

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would open all of unit 15B, with the exception of Kalgin Island (which is not a trophy area), to general season harvest ticket hunting regulations and eliminate the current draw hunt structure in the eastern half of the unit.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

See Proposal 65.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED?

The entirety of Unit 15B except for Kalgin Island would fall under general season harvest ticket regulations, which are currently 1 bull with antlers that are spike on at least one side, or 50” wide or, with 3 brow tines on at least one side, and all drawing hunts would be eliminated in Unit 15B.

BACKGROUND: Unit 15B moose have been at low densities since the 1990s. In 2017, a moose census was conducted in Unit 15B, which produced a population estimate of 837 moose (95% CI ±167). No recent composition data have been collected in Unit 15B. In 2014, significant habitat turnover occurred in this unit through the Funny River Wildfire, which

encompassed about 200,000 acres. Consequently moose numbers are expected to increase in coming years as animals begin to take advantage of early successional habitat.

Bulls harvested by permit in the “Trophy Bull Area” in recent years are of limited size and typically smaller than bulls harvested under the general harvest ticket hunt in other portions of the Kenai. Kenai National Wildlife Refuge regulations restrict the means by which the majority of the unit may be accessed, which will help to ensure a hunt with limited human interaction is still possible for those seeking such an experience.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is NEUTRAL on this proposal but believes that increased opportunity and harvest can be achieved by changing all of Unit 15B except Kalgin Island to general harvest regulations.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 70 – 5 AAC 85.045 Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

PROPOSED BY: Kenai/Soldotna Fish and Game Advisory Committee

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would open all of unit 15B, with the exception of Kalgan Island, to general season harvest ticket hunting regulations and eliminate the current draw hunt structure in the eastern half of the unit.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

See Proposal 65.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED?

The entirety of Unit 15B except for Kalgin Island would fall under general season harvest ticket regulations which are currently 1 bull with antlers that are a spike on at least one side, or 50” wide or, with 3 brow tines on at least one side, and all drawing hunts would be eliminated.

BACKGROUND: Unit 15B moose have been at low densities since the 1990s. In 2017, a moose census was conducted in Unit 15B, which produced a population estimate of 837 moose (95% CI ±167). No recent composition data have been collected in Unit 15B. In 2014, significant habitat turnover occurred in this unit through the Funny River Wildfire, which encompassed about 200,000 acres. Consequently moose numbers are expected to increase in coming years as animals begin to take advantage of early successional habitat.

Bulls harvested by permit in the “Trophy Bull Area” in recent years are of limited size and typically smaller than bulls harvested under the general harvest ticket hunt in other portions of the Kenai. Kenai National Wildlife Refuge regulations restrict the means by which the majority

of the unit may be accessed, which will help to ensure a hunt with limited human interaction is still possible for those seeking such an experience.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is NEUTRAL on this proposal but believes that increased opportunity and harvest can be achieved by changing all of Unit 15B (except Kalgin Island) to general harvest ticket regulations.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 71 – 5 AAC 85.045 Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would open all of unit 15B, except for Kalgin Island, to general season harvest ticket hunting regulations and eliminate the current draw hunt structure in the eastern half of the unit.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

See Proposal 65.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED?

The entirety of Unit 15B except for Kalgin Island would fall under general season harvest ticket regulations, which are currently 1 bull with antlers that are a spike on at least one side, or 50” wide or, with 3 brow tines on at least one side, and all drawing hunts would be eliminated.

BACKGROUND: Unit 15B moose have been at low densities since the 1990s. In 2017, a moose census was conducted in Unit 15B, which produced a population estimate of 837 moose (95% CI ±167). No recent composition data have been collected in Unit 15B. In 2014, significant habitat turnover occurred in this unit through the Funny River Wildfire, which encompassed about 200,000 acres. Consequently moose numbers are expected to increase in coming years as animals begin to take advantage of early successional habitat.

Bulls harvested by permit in the “Trophy Bull Area” in recent years are of limited size and typically smaller than bulls harvested under the general harvest ticket hunt in other portions of the Kenai. Kenai National Wildlife Refuge regulations restrict the means by which the majority of the unit may be accessed, which will help to ensure a hunt with limited human interaction is still possible for those seeking such an experience.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is NEUTRAL on this proposal but believes that increased opportunity and harvest can be achieved by changing all of Unit 15B (except for Kalgin Island) to general harvest ticket regulations.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 85 – 5 AAC 85.015. Hunting seasons and bag limits for black bear.

PROPOSED BY: Homer Fish and Game Advisory Committee

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would set the black bear bag limit in Units 7 (south of the city limits of Seward at 60° 04’ 58” N. latitude) and Unit 15 (South of the Bradley River, Bradley Lake, and Kachemak Creek) to two bears: one between January 1-May 31, and one between June 1-December 31.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

| | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------|-------------|
| | Resident | |
| | Open Season | |
| Units and Bag Limits | (Subsistence and | Nonresident |
| (3) | General Hunts) | Open Season |
| Unit 7, that portion south of | | |
| The city limits of Seward at 60° | | |
| 04’ 58” N. lat., and Unit 15, | | |
| that portion south of Kachemak | | |
| Creek, Bradley River, | | |
| and Bradley Lake | | |

RESIDENT HUNTERS:
3 bears No closed season.
 (General hunt only)

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:
1 bear No closed season.

Remainder of Units 7 and 15

RESIDENT HUNTERS:
3 bears No closed season
 (General hunt only)

NONRESIDENT
HUNTERS:

3 bears

No closed season.

The board has not made a customary and traditional use determination for the black bear population in the portion of Unit 15 that is outside the Anchorage-Matsu-Kenai Peninsula Nonsubsistence Area.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED?

The black bear bag limit in Units 7 and 15 south of the city of Seward and south of Kachemak Bay would be reduced to 1 bear in the spring and bear 1 in the fall.

BACKGROUND: Black bear harvest for the Kenai Peninsula has cycled significantly in the last 10 years, peaking in 2010. Harvest has historically been managed according to the percentage of females taken each year, with a management objective of not exceeding 40% female harvest during the most recent 3 year period. During the last 3 year period (RY 2015 – 2017) the percent females in the harvest was 27%. Female harvest for the Kenai peaked in 2011 at 40%. The majority of black bear harvest in Unit 15C (73%, 2008-2017) occurs south of Kachemak Bay and a substantial portion of the harvest for Unit 7 (18%, 2008-2017) occurs south of the city of Seward in the area referenced by the proposal.

Black bear harvest regulations have significantly changed twice in the last 10 years in the proposed area. In 2009, the bag limit changed from 1 bear in the spring (January 1- June 30) and 1 bear in the fall (July 1- December 31) for all hunters, to 2 bears per year for residents and 1 bear per year for nonresidents. In 2011, the bag limit changed again to 3 bears per year for residents and 1 bear per year for nonresidents in the proposed area.

The 2009 bag limit change significantly affected harvest by shifting the proportion of animals harvested by hunters during the same season from 50% prior to 2009, to 89% in 2009 and 2010. The yearly average of hunters who took more than one bear also increased from 7 to 19. Since the bag limit was increased to 3 bears per year for residents in 2011, 80% of hunters that harvest more than one bear do so in the same season. Little change has occurred in the percentage of hunters who harvest more than one bear of which at least one is a female, which averaged 55% (2008-2017). An average of 1 hunter per year has harvested 3 bears in a single year in the proposed harvest area.

Subsistence uses of black bears are documented in Unit 15C but the board has never made a C&T finding for this population. The Division of Subsistence first prepared a customary and traditional use worksheet for black bears in this portion of GMU 15C for the March 1988 board meeting. The worksheet was updated in 1990, 1991, 1993 [as worksheet II (31) in the set of worksheets prepared for the February 1993 board meeting], and 1994. No review of or action on this information occurred at these meetings. Of 46 total black bear harvests reported by the 3 communities within the Unit 15C subsistence area (Seldovia, Port Graham, and Nanwalek, 2008-

2017), 34 (73%) occurred between June 1 and December 31 and 12 (26%) occurred between January 1 and May 31. Additional undocumented harvest is believed to occur in these communities.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is NEUTRAL on this proposal. No biological concern currently exists for black bears on the Kenai Peninsula.

Because the board has not addressed whether the black bear population in that portion of GMU 15C outside the Anchorage-Matsu-Kenai Nonsubsistence Area supports customary and traditional uses, as required under AS 16.05.258(a), the department recommends that it make this determination. The department has prepared a customary and traditional use worksheet, organized by the factors listed in 5 AAC 99.010(b), to assist the board in its deliberations. The department also recommends that if the board finds that this population supports customary and traditional uses, it also determine the amount reasonably necessary for subsistence (ANS), as directed by AS 16.05.258(b).

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 88 – 5 AAC 92.530(6). Management Areas.

PROPOSED BY: Kenai/Soldotna Fish and Game Advisory Committee

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal modifies the boundary of the Skilak Loop Management area to north of the Kenai River.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

5 AAC 92.530. The Skilak Loop wildlife Management Area:

- (A) the area consists of that portion of Units 15(A) and 15(B) bounded by a line beginning at the easternmost junction of the Sterling Highway and the Skilak Loop road (milepost 58), then due south to the south bank of the Kenai River, then southerly along the south bank of the Kenai River to its confluence with Skilak Lake, then westerly along the north shore of Skilak Lake to Lower Skilak Lake Campground, then northerly along the Lower Skilak Lake Campground road and the Skilak Loop road to its westernmost junction with the Sterling Highway (milepost 75.1), then easterly along the Sterling Highway to the point of origin
- (B) the area is closed to hunting and trapping , except that
 - (i) moose may be taken by permit only;
 - (ii) small game may be taken by;
 - (a) Falconry or bow and arrow only from October 1 through March 1; and

- (b) Standard .22 caliber rimfire firearm and shotgun only, in that portion of the area west of a line from the access road from the Sterling Highway to Kelley Lake, the Seven Lakes Trail, and the access road from Engineer Lake to Skilak Lake road, and north of Skilak Lake road, during each Saturday and Sunday from November 1 through December 31 and the Friday following Thanksgiving day, by youth hunters 16 years old or younger accompanied by a licensed hunter 18 years old or older who has successfully completed a certified hunter education course if the youth has not successfully completed a certified hunter education course;
- (iii) Wolf, coyote, and lynx may be taken under applicable hunting regulations from November 10 through March 31, except within ¼ mile of the Engineer, Kelly, Petersen, and Hidden Lake campgrounds and within ¼ mile of boat launches.
- (c) A firearm may not be discharged within one-quarter mile of any campground

This area is within the Anchorage-Matsu-Kenai Peninsula Nonsubsistence Area.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED?

The boundary of the Skilak Loop Management area would be shifted to the north bank of the Kenai River, opening up waterfowl hunting opportunities in the river and increasing trapping opportunities on the south bank.

BACKGROUND: The Kenai National Wildlife Refuge was originally established as the Kenai National Moose Range by executive order in 1941, primarily to “protect the natural breeding and feeding range for the giant Kenai moose on the Kenai Peninsula, Alaska”. It was reestablished as the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge in 1980 with the enactment of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) with the following purposes:

- (i) to conserve fish and wildlife populations and habitats in their natural diversity including, but not limited to moose, bear, mountain goats, Dall sheep, wolves and other furbearers, salmonids and other fish, waterfowl and other migratory and nonmigratory birds;
- (ii) to fulfill the international treaty obligations of the United States with respect to fish and wildlife and their habitats;
- (iii) to ensure to the maximum extent practicable and in a manner consistent with the purposes set forth in paragraph (i), water quality and necessary water quantity with the refuge;
- (iv) to provide in a manner consistent with subparagraphs (i) and (ii), opportunities for scientific research, interpretation, environmental education, and land management training;
- (v) to provide, in a manner compatible with these purposes, opportunities for fish and wildlife oriented recreation.

The National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 recognizes six wildlife-dependent recreational uses as priority public uses of the Refuge System: hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, environmental education, and interpretation. The Act further states these are legitimate and appropriate public uses where compatible with the Refuge System mission and the individual refuge purposes, and that they are to receive enhanced consideration over other uses in planning and management. All six of the priority public uses have been determined compatible with the mission of, and are authorized on, the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge.

In 1985, the Refuge established the “Skilak Loop Special Management Area” to be managed for increased opportunities for wildlife viewing and environmental education and interpretation as part of its first Comprehensive Conservation Plan. The Refuge worked closely with ADF&G to identify specific goals for providing wildlife viewing and interpretation opportunities, and hunting and trapping opportunities were restricted so wildlife would become more abundant, less wary, and more easily observed. Regulatory proposals that prohibited trapping, allowed taking of small game by archery only, and provided for the harvesting of moose by permit only were developed by ADF&G and adopted and approved by the Board of Game in 1987.

In 2005, the Board of Game adopted a proposal to allow firearms hunting for small game and fur bearers, but put the regulation on hold pending the development of an updated management plan from the Refuge. In 2007 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service released a Finding of No Significant Impact and a “youth only” small game firearms hunt was established in the western portion of the management area by the Board of Game in 2007. The taking of furbearers remained closed.

In 2012, regulations were amended by both the Kenai Wildlife Refuge and the Board of Game to allow the harvest of small game by falconry within the management area.

In 2013, the Board of Game adopted and passed a proposal to allow the taking of wolf, coyote, and lynx under hunting regulations. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, however, found the change to be in conflict with refuge management plans, since “furbearers such as wolves, coyote and lynx are not as easily observed as more abundant and/or less wary wildlife species”, and “These species occur in relatively low densities and annual removal of individual wolves, coyote or lynx from the Skilak Wildlife Recreation Area, and/or a change in their behavior, due to hunting would reduce opportunities for the public to view, photograph or otherwise experience these species”. Since 2013 the state and federal regulations governing the harvest of wolf, coyote, and lynx have been in direct conflict, which has led to confusion for some hunters of what is allowable harvest within the Skilak Loop Management Area.

This proposal would also affect the Kenai River Special Management Area (KRSMA), which was established in 1984, and is managed by joint agreement between the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under the Kenai River Comprehensive Management Plan adopted in 1997. Current regulations within the KRSMA are as follows:

11 AAC 20.850. Use of weapons

- (a) The use and discharge of a weapon for the purpose of lawful hunting or trapping is allowed in the Kenai River Special Management Area only on Skilak Lake and Kenai Lake, except as provided in (b) of this section.
- (b) A person may use and discharge a shotgun below Skilak Lake, for the purpose of lawful hunting or trapping, from September 1 to April 30 annually.
- (c) Except as provided in (d) of this section, the discharge of any firearm is prohibited within one-half mile of a developed facility or dwelling.
- (d) A person may discharge a shotgun using steel shot no larger than size T, 0.2 inches in diameter, at a distance of no less than one-quarter mile from a developed facility or dwelling.”

The particular reach of the Kenai River affected by this proposal as identified in the management plan is Reach 6, Skilak Lake to Kenai Lake, which is managed to “1) recognize rural, low density recreational cabin and single family residential uses and limited, river dependent commercial uses in the Cooper Landing section (RM 80 to RM 82); 2) maintain the drift fishery on Kenai River and focus the high density bank fishery to designated areas on the Russian and Kenai Rivers having adequate facilities; 3) expand the drift only area to include the area between the power line and Fisherman’s bend (RM 72.9 to RM 80.7); 4) focus the motor boat fishery to the Cooper Landing section (RM 80.7 to RM 82); 5) focus limited intensity commercial uses to sites within the Cooper Landing section; and 6) manage the river to maintain the existing world class rainbow fishing quality of this section. Motor boat rental and guiding facilities are only appropriate within the Cooper Landing section of this reach. The section of the Kenai River between the Russian River (River Mile 73) to Skilak Lake should be maintained in its present natural condition, particularly that area known as the “Kenai Canyon”. Airplane operations are not appropriate within this section, except in the Cooper Landing section.”

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is NEUTRAL on this proposal but notes that consultation with the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge should occur in order to avoid conflicting regulations

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 89 – 5 AAC 84.270(1) Furbearer trapping.

PROPOSED BY: Jim Van Oss

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would close beaver trapping in the headwaters of the South Fork of the Anchor River drainage starting at the fork in T4S R12W section 19.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

(1) Beaver

| Species and Units | Open Season | Bag Limits |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Units 7 & 15 | Oct. 15 – Apr. 30 | 20 per season |

The area specified by the proposal is within the Anchorage-Matsu-Kenai Peninsula Nonsubsistence Area.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED?

Beaver trapping would be closed in the headwaters of the South Fork of the Anchor River.

BACKGROUND: Historically the Anchor River drainage has supported a significant harvest of beaver. In 1976, almost half (64 of 136) of the beaver taken in Unit 15 came from the Anchor River drainage system. The last documented harvest of beaver in this system was 1 beaver in 2011; previously to this, a beaver had not been harvested since 2006, when 4 beaver were taken. Beaver harvest across Unit 15C has declined significantly in recent years, from an average of 22 beaver per year (2012-2016) to 5 in 2017. Trappers reported low numbers and poor recruitment to local staff along traditional trap lines in 2017.

ADF&G does not conduct surveys for beaver on a regular basis on the Kenai Peninsula. In 2018, a beaver survey was flown covering the Anchor River and surrounding drainages. One active site was found within the Anchor River drainage. Surrounding drainages held multiple active sites.

Beaver are a keystone species, manipulating their environment for their own benefit. Beaver impound water and trap nutrients, which creates riparian habitat beneficial to moose, migratory birds, juvenile salmon, and other wildlife species. Their manipulations, however, are also known to cause problems with anadromous fish passage, roadways, and private property. Typically dams can be navigated by migratory fish at higher water levels or via overflow channels. Beaver dams generally improve habitat for rearing salmonids by storing water that can be used by juvenile salmon for overwintering ponds, particularly Coho salmon, and assist in wetland formation and maintenance upstream of the structure. To deal with problems caused by beaver

the department issues permits for the take of nuisance beaver as required. No nuisance beaver permits have been issued for the Anchor River drainage in recent history.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is NEUTRAL on this proposal

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 90 – 5 AAC 92.530(6) Management areas
5 AAC 85.065. Hunting seasons ad bag limits for small game.

PROPOSED BY: Kenai/Soldotna Fish and Game Advisory Committee

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Remove the date restrictions and expand the hunt area for the small game youth hunt in the Skilak Loop Wildlife Management Area.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

5 AAC 92.530(6)
See Proposal 88.

5 AAC 85.065

| Units and Bag Limits | Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts) | Nonresident Open Season |
|---|---|----------------------------|
| <p>(1) Grouse (spruce, blue, ruffed, and sharp tailed)</p> <p>Units 7 & 15</p> <p>10 per day, 20 in possession, of which not more than 1 per day and 2 in possession may be ruffed grouse</p> | <p>Aug. 10 – Mar. 31 (General hunt only)</p> | <p>Aug. 10 – Mar. 31</p> |
| <p>(2) Snowshoe and Alaska hares</p> <p>Units 6 – 26, except 14(A) and</p> | <p>No closed season.</p> | <p>No closed season.</p> |

14(C) (General hunt only)

No limit

(3)

Ptarmigan (rock, willow,
and white-tailed)

Units 6(D), 7, 11, 13(A),
13(C),
13 (D), 13(E), and 14,
remainder of 15 and 16

Aug. 10 – Mar. 31

Aug. 10 – Mar. 31

10 per day, 20 in
possession

(4)

Migratory game birds
(except by falconry)

(A) Ducks (except sea
Ducks)

Units 5 – 7, 9, 10 (Unimak
Is. Only), and 14 – 16
8 per day,
24 in possession;

Sept. 1 – Dec. 16
(General hunt only)

Sept. 1 – Dec. 16

However, no more than 2
per day, 6 in possession,
may be Canvasbacks

(B) Sea Ducks (except
Spectacled and Steller's
eider)

Units 5 – 7, 9, 10 (Unimak
Is. only), 14, remainder of
15, and 16

RESIDENT HUNTERS:
10 per day, 20 in
possession, of which no

Sept. 1 – Dec. 16
(General hunt only)

more than 6 per day, 12 in possession, may be harlequin ducks and no more than 6 per day, 12 in possession, may be long-tailed ducks

NONRESIDENT
HUNTERS:

8 per day, 20 in possession; however, no more than 4 each of any sea duck species may be taken per season; and no more than 20 sea ducks of all species may be taken per season

Sept. 1 – Dec. 16

(C) Geese,
Canada and cackling
Combined

Units 7, 11-16, and 19 – 26
4 per day, 12 in possession

Sept. 1 – Dec. 16
(General hunt only)

Sept. 1 – Dec. 16

(D) Geese, White
Fronted

Units 5-7, 11- 16 and 19 –
26
4 per day, 12 in possession

Sept. 1 – Dec. 16
(General hunt only)

Sept. 1 – Dec. 16

(E) Geese, Light
(Snow
and Ross')

Units 5-7, 9, 10
(Unimak Is. only),
and 11-26

Sept. 1 – Dec. 16
(General hunt only)

Sept. 1 – Dec. 16

(F) Brant

| | | |
|---|--|-------------------|
| Units 5 – 7, 9, 10 (Unimak Is. only), and 11-26 | Sept. 1 – Dec. 16 (General hunt only) | Sept. 1 – Dec. 16 |
|---|--|-------------------|

(G) Emperor
Geese

| | | |
|---|-----------------|----------------|
| Units 1-7, 11-16, 19-21, and 24-26 | No open season. | No open season |
|---|-----------------|----------------|

(H) Cranes

| | | |
|---|--|-------------------|
| Units 5 – 7, 9, 10 (Unimak Is. only), and 14 – 17 | Sept. 1 – Dec. 16 (General hunt only) | Sept. 1 – Dec. 16 |
|---|--|-------------------|

(I) Snipe

| | | |
|--|---|-------------------|
| Units 5-7, 9, 10 (Unimak Is. only), and 11-26 | Sept. 1- Dec. 16 (General hunt only) | Sept. 1 – Dec. 16 |
|--|---|-------------------|

(J) Tundra Swans

| | | |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| All other units | No open season | No open season |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|

This area is within the Anchorage-Matsu-Kenai Peninsula Nonsubsistence Area.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED?

This proposal would remove the date restrictions for the Skilak Loop Youth Hunt, align the season for the Skilak Loop Youth small game hunts by species for all small game hunts in Unit 15, and expand the hunt area to the entire Skilak Loop Management Area.

BACKGROUND: The Kenai National Wildlife Refuge was originally established as the Kenai National Moose Range by executive order in 1941 primarily to “protect the natural breeding and feeding range for the giant Kenai moose on the Kenai Peninsula, Alaska”. It was reestablished as the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge in 1980 with the enactment of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) with the following purposes:

- (i) to conserve fish and wildlife populations and habitats in their natural diversity including, but no limited to moose, bear, mountain goats, Dall sheep, wolves and other furbearers, salmonids and other fish, waterfowl and other migratory and

nonmigratory birds; (ii) to fulfill the international treaty obligations of the United States with respect to fish and wildlife and their habitats; (iii) to ensure to the maximum extent practicable and in a manner consistent with the purposes set forth in paragraph (i), water quality and necessary water quantity with the refuge; (iv) to provide in a manner consistent with subparagraphs (i) and (ii), opportunities for scientific research, interpretation, environmental education, and land management training; and (v) to provide, in a manner compatible with these purposes, opportunities for fish and wildlife oriented recreation.

The National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 recognizes six wildlife-dependent recreational uses as priority public uses of the Refuge System: hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, environmental education, and interpretation. The Act further states these are legitimate and appropriate public uses where compatible with the Refuge System mission and the individual refuge purposes, and that they are to receive enhanced consideration over other uses in planning and management. All six of the priority public uses have been determined compatible with the mission of, and are authorized on, the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge.

In 1985, the Refuge established the “Skilak Loop Special Management Area” to be managed for increased opportunities for wildlife viewing and environmental education and interpretation as part of its first Comprehensive Conservation Plan. The Refuge worked closely with ADF&G to identify specific goals for providing wildlife viewing and interpretation opportunities, and hunting and trapping opportunities were restricted so wildlife would become more abundant, less wary, and more easily observed. Regulatory proposals that prohibited trapping, allowed taking of small game by archery only, and provided for the harvesting of moose by permit only were developed by ADF&G and adopted and approved by the Board of Game in 1987.

In 2005, the Board of Game adopted a proposal to allow firearms hunting for small game and fur bearers, but put the regulation on hold pending the development of an updated management plan from the Refuge. In 2007 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service released a Finding of No Significant Impact and a “youth only” small game firearms hunt was established in the western portion of the management area by the Board of Game in 2007. The taking of furbearers remained closed.

In 2012, regulations were amended by both the Kenai Wildlife Refuge and the Board of Game to allow the harvest of small game by falconry within the management area.

In 2013, the Board of Game adopted and passed a proposal to allow the taking of wolf, coyote, and lynx under hunting regulations. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, however, found the change to be in conflict with refuge management plans, since “furbearers such as wolves, coyote and lynx are not as easily observed as more abundant and/or less wary wildlife species”, and “These species occur in relatively low densities and annual removal of individual wolves, coyote or lynx from the Skilak Wildlife Recreation Area, and/or a change in their behavior, due to hunting would reduce opportunities for the public to view, photograph or otherwise experience these species” Since 2013 the state and federal regulations governing the harvest of wolf,

coyote, and lynx have been in direct conflict, which has led to confusion for some hunters of what is allowable harvest within the Skilak Loop Management Area.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is NEUTRAL on this proposal but notes that consultation with the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge should occur in order to avoid conflicting regulations.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 91 – 5 AAC 92.080. Unlawful methods of taking game; exceptions.

PROPOSED BY: Victoria Wilson Winne.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would prohibit the discharge of firearms, crossbows, or bow and arrows for the purpose of hunting within ½ mile of a residence or outbuilding in Unit 15C South of Anchor Point and North of Kachemak Bay and the Fox River drainage without written permission of the landowner.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

5 AAC 92.080. The following methods of taking game are prohibited:

- (1) By shooting from, on or across a highway;

This area is within the Anchorage-Matsu-Kenai Peninsula Nonsubsistence Area.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED?

This proposal would prohibit the discharge of firearms, crossbows, or bows and arrows within ½ mile of a residence or outbuilding in Unit 15C South of Anchor Point and North of Kachemak Bay and the Fox River drainage without written permission of the landowner. This would include hunting on any property adjacent to the residence or building within ½ mile even if owned by another entity such as the State of Alaska (public land). This proposal may negatively affect the public’s ability to hunt on public and private lands to which they have legal access.

BACKGROUND: Current Alaska statutes and hunting regulations are designed to protect landowners and the public. All hunters born after January 1, 1986 who are 18 years old or older are required to have successfully completed a basic hunter education course before hunting in Unit 15C. Hunters under 18 years of age are required to have either successfully completed a basic hunter education course or be under the direct immediate supervision of a licensed hunter who is:

(a) 18 years of age or older and successfully completed a certified hunter education course, or (b) born on or before January 1, 1986.

Hunter education courses include basic firearm handling, firearm safety, and hunting ethics. This course is designed to help prevent hunting incidents, hunter conflicts, and promote ethical hunting practices.

Alaska Statutes currently protect landowners against trespass on properly posted land (AS 11.46.300 – 11.46.350).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is NEUTRAL on this proposal. Current hunting, trespass, and firearms discharge laws adequately protect homeowners and their property, if followed.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 92 – 5 AAC 85.065. Hunting seasons and bag limits for small game.

PROPOSED BY: Kenai/Soldotna Fish and Game Advisory Committee

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Establish a hunting season for tundra swans in Units 7 and 15.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

(J) Tundra swans

| Units and Bag Limits | Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts) | Nonresident Open Season |
|---|---|----------------------------|
| Unit 17 | | |
| 3 Swans per season, by registration permit only; up to 200 permits will be issued | Sept. 1- Oct. 31 (General hunt only) | Sept. 1- Oct. 31 |
| Unit 18 | | |
| 3 Swans per season, by registration permit only; up to 300 | Sept. 1- Oct. 31 (General hunt only) | Sept. 1- Oct. 31 |

permits will be issued

Unit 22

| | | |
|---|---|------------------|
| 3 Swans per season, by registration permit only; up to 200 permits will be issued | Sept. 1- Oct. 31 (General hunt only) | Sept. 1- Oct. 31 |
|---|---|------------------|

Unit 23

| | | |
|---|---|------------------|
| 3 Swans per season, by registration permit only; up to 200 permits will be issued | Sept. 1- Oct. 31 (General hunt only) | Sept. 1- Oct. 31 |
|---|---|------------------|

| | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| All other units | No open season. | No open season. |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|

There is a positive customary and traditional use finding for all migratory game birds, including tundra swans, in all units with a harvestable portion (except in state nonsubsistence areas). No amount reasonably necessary has been found for migratory game birds, including tundra swans.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED?

This proposal would allow the harvest of tundra swans in Units 7 and 15 between October 1 and December 16 under proper licensing either by general season harvest ticket or registration permit. Adoption of this proposal would conflict with state and federal regulations. In addition, incidental take of trumpeter swans is likely, due to their widespread distribution on the Kenai Peninsula during the summer and fall, coupled with the difficulty of species identification due to the morphological similarities of tundra and trumpeter swans.

BACKGROUND: There are two species and three populations of swans that breed in Alaska: tundra swans (western and eastern populations) and trumpeter swans. The western and eastern populations of tundra swans are differentiated by their breeding areas, wintering areas, and migration routes. The western population of tundra swans breed in coastal tundra areas of western Alaska from the Alaska Peninsula northward to the Seward Peninsula, with most (76%) breeding on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. The eastern population breeds along coastal areas of the Arctic Coastal Plain. Trumpeter swans breed in the forested zones of the Interior and Southcentral Alaska, including primarily the Copper River Delta, Cook Inlet lowlands (including the Kenai Peninsula), Gulkana Basin, and Tanana River valley.

Population abundance for both species is estimated using aerial surveys of their breeding areas conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Tundra swans breeding in western Alaska are relatively plentiful: the 2018 population estimate was 153,000 swans. Trumpeter swans are less numerous, at an estimated 28,808 swans in Alaska, based on the most recent survey in 2015.

Trumpeter swans ostensibly are more prevalent than tundra swans on the Kenai Peninsula during the autumn harvest period. Observational and survey data indicate that trumpeter swans are widespread on the Kenai Peninsula during the summer nesting period, and also through autumn

when young birds fledge in late-September to October. Conversely, there have been few reported observations (~10) of tundra swans during autumn on the Kenai Peninsula; observations were primarily of single birds or small groups (2 - 10) flying eastbound, generally indicative of migratory movements. Data from satellite-marked tundra swans in western Alaska indicate that the Kenai Peninsula is an occasional migration pathway for some coastal migrants, likely tundra swans nesting on the Alaska Peninsula.

In Alaska, western tundra swans are open to harvest in areas where trumpeter swans are rare or uncommon. Current federal regulations allow tundra swan harvest by permit only during framework season dates of September 1 to October 31 in four Units: 17, 18, 22, and 23.

Trumpeter swans are closed to harvest in all of North America, including Alaska.

Of the 11 Pacific Flyway states, Montana, Nevada, and Utah also are permitted to hunt western tundra swans in areas where minimal temporal and/or spatial overlap between tundra and trumpeter swans occur. These hunts were allowed after an Environmental Assessment (EA) determined low risk of significant impact to trumpeter swans. These states are allowed a small quota of trumpeter swan take, but are required to implement a harvest monitoring program to measure species composition of the swan harvest. The tundra swan hunts will close if the trumpeter swan quotas are reached. Alaska was exempted from the EA because permit hunts were conducted in areas where trumpeter swans do not naturally occur.

The western population of tundra swans is cooperatively managed under a Pacific Flyway management plan that was agreed to by nine western states and approved by the Pacific Flyway Council. The management plan includes a harvest strategy with guidelines for managing existing tundra swan hunts and procedures for new hunt proposals. The guidelines specify that new hunts or significant adjustments to existing hunts will be considered by the Pacific Flyway Council. In addition, new hunts are subject to a number of proposal requirements listed in the management plan including a revised EA by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is NEUTRAL to this proposal but notes that adoption of this proposal would conflict with state and federal regulations. An open season for tundra swans would likely lead to the illegal harvest of trumpeter swans due to misidentification by hunters, particularly since trumpeter swans are more prevalent than tundra swans on the Kenai Peninsula, and these species are very difficult to differentiate in flight even for wildlife professionals.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal may result in additional costs to the department to develop and implement a program that monitors take of trumpeter swans.

PROPOSAL 127 – 5 AAC 85.045. Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose. Open a registration permit hunt for moose in Unit 19A.

PROPOSED BY: Henry Hill.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would create a Tier I registration permit for moose hunting in the portion of Unit 19A that is currently closed.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There are currently two Tier II hunts in Unit 19A.

- One is within the Kuskokwim River drainage downstream of and including the George River and downstream of and excluding Downey Creek, one antlered bull by permit (TM680), September 1–20.
- The other is within the Lime Village Management Area (LMVA), two bulls by permit (TM684), August 10–September 25 and November 20–March 31.
- The remainder of Unit 19A is closed to all moose hunting.

The board has made a positive C&T finding for moose in Unit 19. The amounts reasonably necessary for subsistence (ANS) for Unit 19 outside the LVMA is 400–700 moose, including 175–225 moose in Unit 19A and 20–24 moose in Unit 19B. In Unit 19A inside the LVMA, the ANS is 30–40 moose.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If this proposal were adopted, a new Tier I registration permit would allow hunting in the portion of Unit 19A that is currently closed.

BACKGROUND: A GeoSpatial Population Estimator (GSPE) moose survey was conducted in all of 19A in February 2017. We estimated 1,932 moose (0.6 moose/mi²) in the 3,419 mi² closed portion of 19A. This shows slight improvement from a similar GSPE survey conducted in 2005 which showed 0.3 moose/mi². While the overall density in Unit 19A remainder (the proposed hunt area) remains low, the bull:cow ratios from fall composition surveys in 2016 and 2017 were 58 bulls:100 cows and 36 bulls:100 cows, respectively. Additionally the harvestable surplus for all of Unit 19A (excluding LVMA) is now 242 moose.

Prior to Regulatory Year 2000 (RY00) moose hunting in Unit 19A (outside the LVMA) was fairly liberal with a bag limit of 1 bull during September 1–20 or November 20–30. There was an additional winter hunt during February 1–10 below and including the Kolmakof and Holokuk rivers with a bag limit of any bull. Upstream of those rivers, the bag limit was any moose. However due to growing concern over declining moose numbers, the February season was closed by emergency order in RY00 in all of Unit 19A. The season was again closed by emergency order in RY01 in that portion upriver of the Kolmakof and Holokuk rivers.

In 2002 the Board of Game made several regulatory changes including shortening the winter hunt upstream of the Kolmakof and Holokuk rivers by 5 days to February 1–5 and changing the bag limit from 1 moose to 1 bull. In addition, a nonresident closed area was created through a 2-mile buffer area on either side of the major drainages in Unit 19A and in portions of Unit 19B. Furthermore the board requested that the department initiate a planning process to more completely address concerns about declining moose numbers in Units 19A and 19B.

As requested, a planning process began in October 2002. The Central Kuskokwim Moose Management Planning Committee (CKMC) was created with members representing Fish and Game Advisory Committees (ACs), guides, transporters, Native organizations and conservation groups. This committee was not able to reach a consensus on all recommended regulatory actions. However, when the board met in 2004 they endorsed the committee's Central Kuskokwim Moose Management Plan and adopted the majority's recommendations with minor revisions. These changes included closing all of Unit 19A to nonresidents, eliminating the November and February seasons and creating a Tier I registration hunt for residents. The board also adopted findings to authorize wolf control in all of Unit 19A; aerial shooting of wolves began in RY04.

The registration hunt implemented by the board lasted 2 years with just over 1,000 permits issued each season and an average of 147 moose harvested. Continuing concern over the level of harvest led to further disagreement within the Central Kuskokwim Advisory Committee. Representatives from the western villages (Lower Kalskag, Kalskag, Aniak, Chuathbaluk and Crooked Creek) in Unit 19A generally favored maintaining hunting opportunity, while representatives from the eastern villages (Red Devil, Sleetmute, Stony River, Lime Village) wanted to close the season entirely and allow the moose population to grow.

Multiple proposals were submitted for the March 2006 Board of Game meeting that addressed seasons and bag limits in Unit 19A, including Proposal 70 submitted by the department. That proposal recommended creating a Tier II hunt in the western portion of Unit 19A (downstream of and including the George River and downstream of and excluding Downey Creek) and closing eastern Unit 19A outside the LVMA (Unit 19A remainder). This proposal was based on moose survey data from 2005 that indicated the harvestable surplus was being exceeded using the registration permit. The department determined there was no harvestable surplus in Unit 19A remainder and a harvestable surplus of only 60 moose in western Unit 19A.

After considerable deliberation, the board modified the Unit 19 ANS from 400-700 moose with 30-40 in the LVMA to the current ANS of 400-700 moose with 30-40 in the LVMA, 175-225 in the remainder of Unit 19A, and 20-24 in Unit 19B. Proposal 70 passed and the board changed the western Unit 19A season to a Tier II hunt downstream of and including the George River and downstream of and excluding Downey Creek. The LVMA remained Tier II and the remainder of Unit 19A was closed to all moose hunting. Those seasons remain in effect today and the moose in Unit 19A outside of the LVMA are managed under 2 different hunt structures.

After continuing disagreement over moose management in Unit 19A, the Central Kuskokwim AC submitted a proposal to split the AC. At a Joint Board of Fisheries and Game meeting in October 2007, Proposal 17 passed, creating the new Central Kuskokwim AC which represents the villages of Lower Kalskag, Kalskag, Aniak, Chuathbaluk, and Crooked Creek, and the Stony-Holitna AC (SHAC) which represents Red Devil, Sleetmute, Stony River and Lime Village. This split has allowed each AC to take a more direct role in moose management in their respective areas.

In 2009 the board reauthorized wolf predation control for another 5 year period. Land status and weather had severely limited wolf take in western Unit 19A and the new plan only authorized wolf control upstream of and including the Holitna River drainage. This area is upstream of Sleetmute along the Kuskokwim River and also includes the Holitna and Stony River drainages.

A moose survey of that area in 2011 did not show an improvement in moose numbers when compared to 2005 data and the board modified the predation control plan in 2012 to include a bear control area encompassing 534 square miles (mi²).

Bear control was conducted by the department in May of 2013 and 2014. In 2013 the department removed 84 black bears (89% removal) and 5 grizzly bears. In 2014 the department removed 54 black bears and 10 grizzly bears. Survival of moose calves improved immediately after bear control and November calf:cow ratios have been above 50 calves:100 cows. The board reauthorized the intensive management plan in March 2014 for a 6 year period and wolf control continues to date.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocative aspects of this proposal; however, if the board chooses to open a hunt, the department recommends a very conservative approach be taken in order to restrict and closely monitor the harvest. This area has been closed since 2006 and caution is needed to ensure the modest gains made over the last 12 years are not erased by an overly aggressive hunt. It is essential that harvest be limited because, while moose densities in Unit 19A have improved overall, most of this improvement has taken place in the western portion of the unit. Although there is a high bull:cow ratio in the closed area and calf:cow ratios have improved, little growth has yet been realized in this portion of Unit 19A.

Demand for moose hunting in the Kuskokwim drainage is high. For example, 300 permits are issued in the western portion of Unit 19A (200 Tier II permits and 100 federal permits) and close to 1,500 permits are issued for the registration hunt in Unit 18 on the Kuskokwim (RM615). For TM680, 280 applications were received in 2018, and 200 permits were available. For TM684, 10 applications were received in 2018, and 7 permits were available.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 128 – 5 AAC 92.540. Controlled Use Areas. Modify the Clearwater Creek Controlled Use Area.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal has been modified and deferred by the Board of Game from the Central/Southwest meeting in 2018 from one that includes the Maclaren Summit Trail in the non-motorized Clearwater Controlled Use Area (CCCUA) to now create an exception to the CCCUA to allow motorized hunters to utilize the Maclaren Summit Trail. If adopted, this amended proposal would modify the eastern border of the Clearwater Creek Controlled Use Area by adding the Maclaren Summit Trail to the boundary description but also allowing motorized use of the Maclaren Summit Trail for hunting.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

5 AAC 92.540(3)

(C) the Clearwater Creek Controlled Use Area:

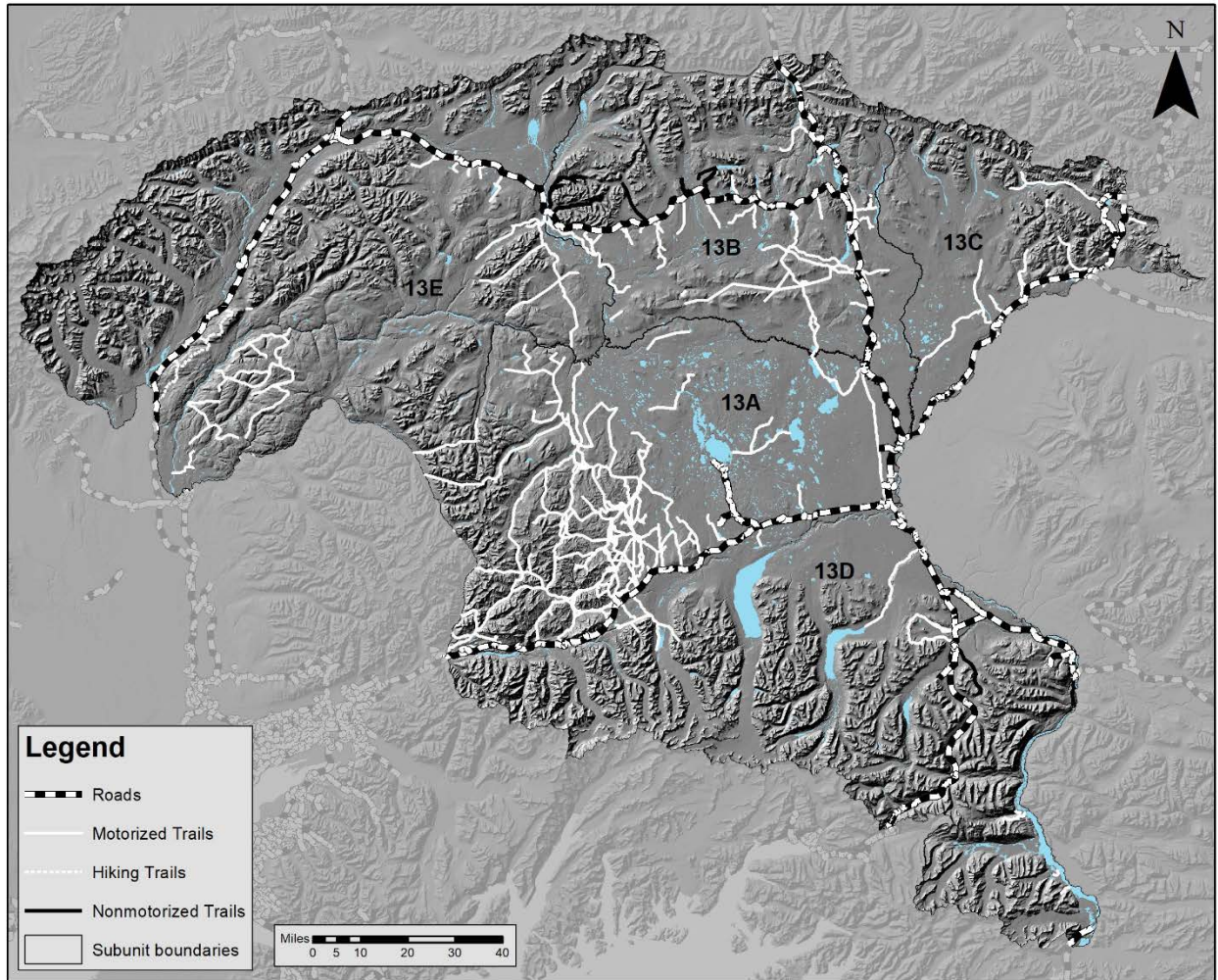
(i) the area consists of that portion of Unit 13(B) north of the Denali Highway, west of and including the Maclaren River drainage, east of and including the eastern bank drainages of the Middle Fork and Susitna River downstream from and including the Susitna Glacier, and the eastern bank drainages of the Susitna River downstream from its confluence with the Middle Fork;

(ii) the area is closed to the use of any motorized vehicle for hunting, including the transportation of hunters, their hunting gear, or parts of game, except for brown/grizzly bears, wolves, and small game from March 15 through June 30; however, this provision does not prohibit motorized access, or transportation of game, on the Denali Highway and adjacent highway vehicle areas

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Adoption of this proposal in this amended form would allow motorized activity along the Maclaren Summit Trail as well as motorized access for hunting and transportation of game in the CCCUA between July 1 and March 14. Creating an exception to allow motorized hunting on the Maclaren Summit Trail will be a departure from previous enforcement and interpretations of the regulations.

BACKGROUND: In 2017, 97% of Unit 13 caribou hunters and 85% of moose hunters reported hunting in subunits 13A, 13B, or 13E, and those percentages have steadily increased over the past decade for hunters of both species. Subunits 13A, 13B, and 13E include at least 80% of the >2,000 miles of trails available to hunters during the fall season in Unit 13. More than 95% of those trails are accessible for motorized hunting (Figure 128-1).

Figure 128-1. Approximation and minimum distribution of fall/summer motorized trails in Unit 13.



The Clearwater Creek Controlled Use Area (CCCUA) was established in 1971 in subunit 13B to prohibit motorized hunting in order to protect localized moose and caribou populations from overharvest. As a result, roadside or non-motorized hunters are attracted to the area, which is one of the few areas where moose and caribou can reasonably be accessed in the fall by non-motorized means. While motorized hunters predictably drive caribou out of accessible areas throughout the hunting season, non-motorized hunters have a lower impact and caribou tend to remain in their preferred areas in the CCCUA throughout the season, making them more reliably available. Over the past decade the percentage of Unit 13 moose and caribou hunters utilizing the CCCUA has steadily increased. In 2017 more than 10% of Unit 13 caribou hunters reported hunting in the CCCUA even though the CCCUA offers fewer than 50 miles of usable trail during the fall season. In both 2016 and 2017, 13% of fall caribou harvest was taken in the CCCUA, even though most of the herd remains outside of the CCCUA throughout the season. The CCCUA allows these hunters to escape competition from more mobile hunters with off-road vehicles. The area provides opportunity for hunters wishing to escape the noise, impacts, and

crowding associated with Unit 13 motorized trails, especially for hunters who may not have motorized equipment at their disposal. Additionally, some CUA hunters choose to access the area to increase the challenge or sense of accomplishment obtained by a successful moose or caribou harvest in an area where motorized assistance is not an option. The CCCUA provides for a variety of hunting values and a quality of hunt that is unique within Unit 13, while protecting important biological resources from overharvest in a vulnerable area. While CCCUA hunters exhibit similar success rates to motorized trail users in the rest of Unit 13, a difference in success rates between CCCUA hunters and highway or non-motorized hunters outside of the CCCUA is apparent (Figure 128-2, Figure 128-3).

Figure 128-2. Success rates of caribou hunters in Unit 13, 2007–2017.

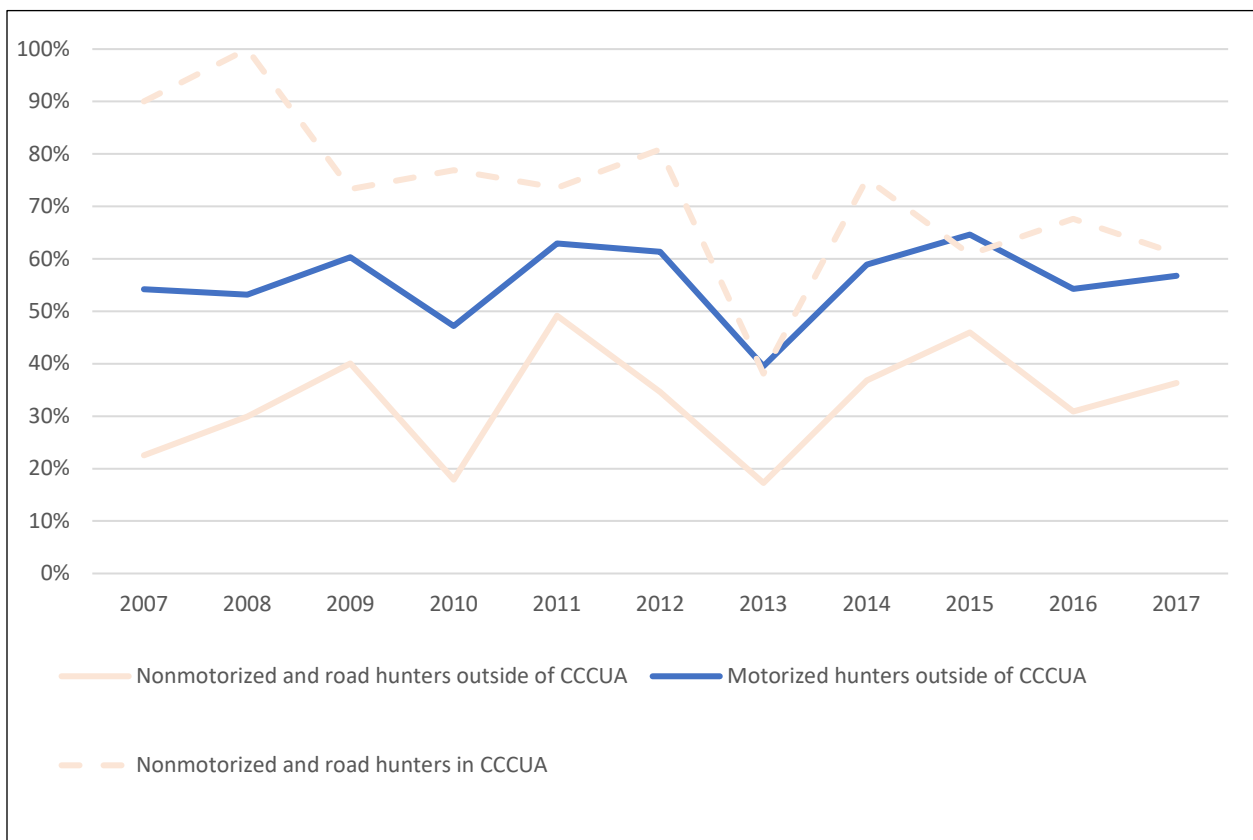
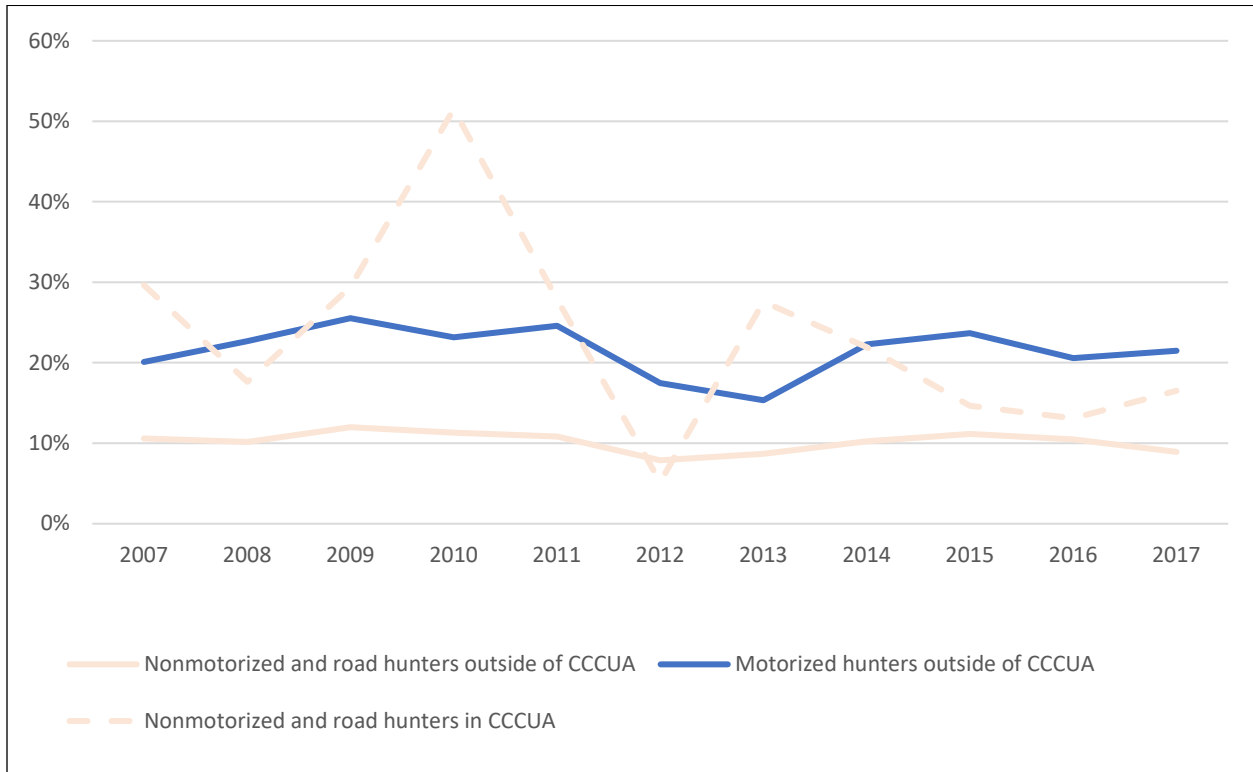
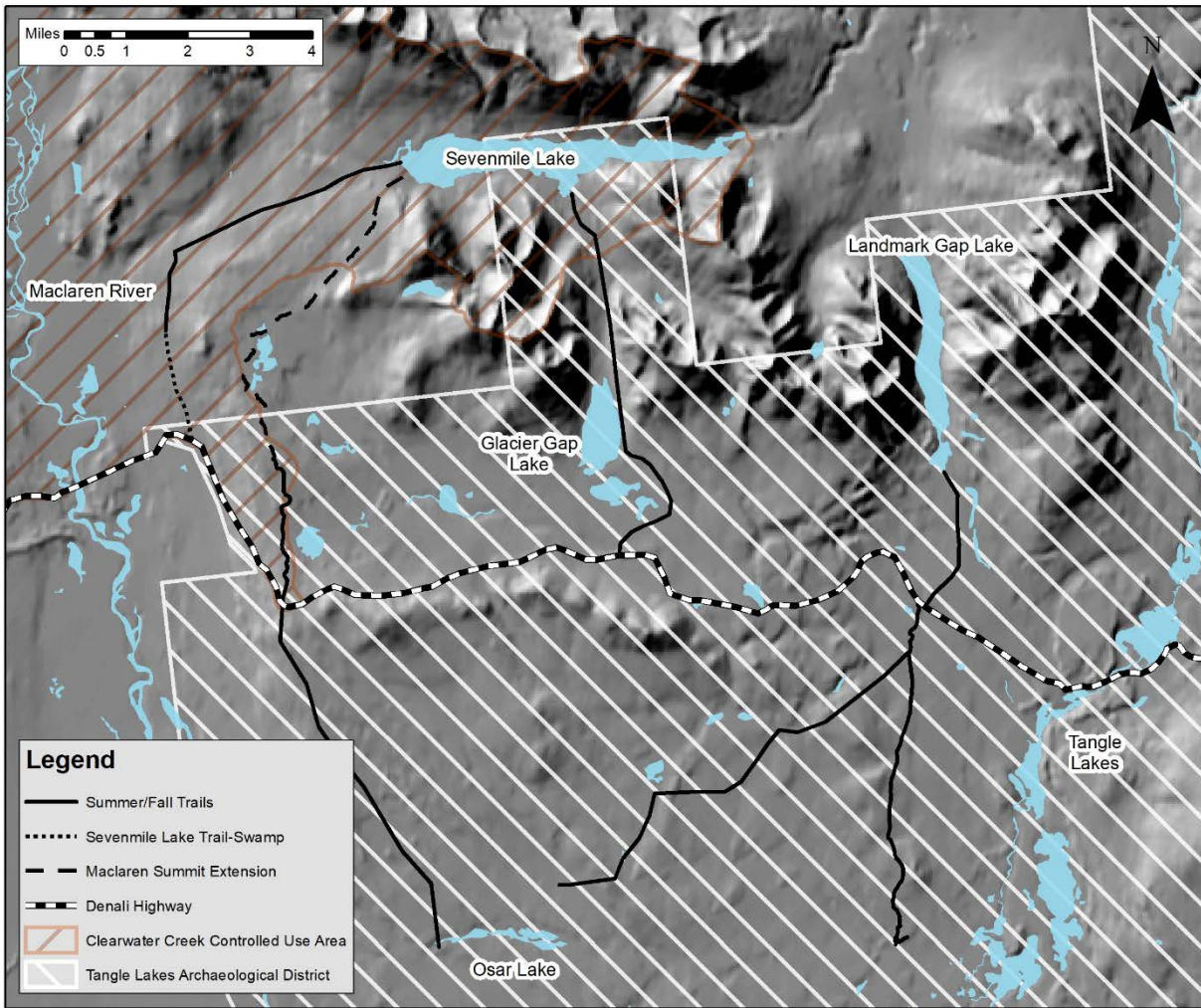


Figure 128-3. Success rates of moose hunters in Unit 13, 2007–2017.



Prior to 2015, the Maclaren Summit Trail (MST) was a 2.6 mile trail entirely within the Tangle Lakes Archaeological District which is an area where off-trail use of motorized vehicles is prohibited when snow is absent (Figure 128-4). The MST is situated near the eastern border of the CCCUA, but was a non-issue when the trail was only 2.6 miles long. Hunters generally must travel four miles or more to access caribou from the trail, except when the caribou are migrating through and can be harvested very close to the Denali Highway on both the north and south side of the highway. During this time, hunters who asked about the MST were told that they could travel the 2.6 miles down the trail and hunt the east side of the trail, but not the west side, and they could not take their motorized vehicles off the trail. These restrictions resulted in very few motorized hunters being interested in the trail due to its short length, the restrictions on off-trail use, and the availability of several longer trails in the near vicinity – including the Osar Lake Trail directly south of the Denali Highway from the MST. No motorized hunters reported harvesting an animal on the trail between 2007 and 2010, and from 2010 to 2014 only 3–4 harvests were reported by motorized users each year. Nonmotorized users reported four to nine times more harvest during those same years. The area has long been popular for nonmotorized users because it is one of the few areas where caribou can reliably be found within five miles of the highway.

Figure 128-4. Overview of the Denali Highway area from Maclaren River to Tangle Lakes in Unit 13B.



In 2015 DNR began to extend the MST without consultation with ADF&G. After completion, DNR cited two reasons for extending the MST. First, the Sevenmile Lake Trail (situated entirely within the CCCUA), which travels north from the Denali Highway in the Maclaren River Valley before turning east to reach Sevenmile Lake, was too swampy in the lowland areas to be used by either motorized or nonmotorized users during summer or fall months. Additionally, DNR stated that users were already extending the Maclaren Summit Trail despite TLAD restrictions, so DNR decided to extend the trail to Sevenmile Lake to provide recreational users and fishermen easier motorized access to the lake and thereby prevent further off-trail motorized use in that area of the TLAD. Trail work increased motorized interest in 2015 when 16 caribou were reported harvested on the trail by ATV/ORV users. Recognizing that the trail extension was attracting motorized hunters, both ADF&G and DNR took a closer look at the trail and determined that the trailhead is within the CCCUA, as are the first three miles of the trail, making the entire trail off-limits for motorized hunting.

The extension of the MST was completed in the summer of 2016, resulting in a roughly nine mile trail that extended all the way to the western end of Sevenmile Lake. In August 2016 ADF&G posted a sign at the Maclaren Summit Trail Kiosk to inform hunters that the trail was within the CCCUA and closed to motorized hunting. Despite these signs, motorized interest continued, and confusion prevailed as the Tangle Lakes Archaeological District clearly lists the Maclaren Summit Trail as an authorized trail for motorized use, regardless that this designation does not supersede the CCCUA prohibition on motorized hunting.

ADF&G staff erected a new 4'x4' white plywood sign located directly adjacent to the trail. The sign remained in place for the entire season and specified that the entire trail was off-limits to motorized hunters, since CCCUA restrictions prohibited motorized transport of hunters or hunting gear through the CCCUA. Despite this, ATV/ORV hunters continued to use the trail in 2016, reporting 23 harvests specifically on the MST and an additional 24 harvests at "Maclaren Summit." When questioned, some motorized hunters reporting harvest on the trail stated that they did not see the 4'x4' white plywood sign. The increased motorized hunting traffic, despite signs to clearly mark the trail as non-motorized, resulted in an increase in complaints aired to ADF&G by non-motorized hunters intending to access the trail to avoid ATVs. Non-motorized hunters in 2016 reported a harvest of 30 caribou at Maclaren Summit or on the MST, which was lower than the amount harvested by non-motorized hunters in either of the previous two years; 2016 was the first year that motorized harvest exceeded non-motorized harvest at Maclaren Summit.

ADF&G consulted with AWT staff members, who believed that the Unit 13 map in the regulation booklet introduced confusion and prevented CCCUA restrictions on the MST from being enforced. Because the MST was specifically listed as an authorized trail in the TLAD description but was not specifically listed as prohibited to motorized hunting in the CCCUA description, AWT requested that ADF&G alter the description of the CCCUA to clearly state that the MST was closed to motorized users.

Additional permanent signs were posted at the MST trailhead in July 2017 and an effort was made to spread the word that the trail was off-limits to motorized hunting, including an explanation published in the Summer 2017 *Nelchina Caribou News* publication. The descriptions for the TLAD and the CCCUA were changed in the 2017–2018 *Alaska Hunting Regulations* to add clarity to the situation, but AWT requested that the description of the CCCUA be changed in regulation to make the situation enforceable. Efforts to clarify that the Maclaren Summit Trail was closed to motorized hunters were followed by a decrease to seven caribou reported by motorized hunters on the MST in 2017, with an additional 11 caribou reported by motorized hunters as "Maclaren Summit". Nonmotorized hunters reported a harvest of 63 caribou. Complaints continued regarding the illegal harvest of caribou on the MST by motorized hunters. At the request of AWT, ADF&G submitted a proposal to the board at the February 2018 meeting

in Dillingham. The board considered using the MST as the eastern boundary for the CCCUA and added the MST as an exception to allow motorized hunters to use the trail. The proposal was amended and deferred to the March 2019 meeting.

Sevenmile Lake is the only lake larger than ½ square mile with protections from motorized access in Unit 13. The existing Glacier Gap Trail (GGT) allows motorized hunters access to the edge of the CCCUA, roughly one mile away from the southern shore of Sevenmile Lake. Hunters must leave motorized vehicles at the border of the CCCUA (a sign is posted) but can then hunt by foot. Sevenmile Lake is known to be an area likely to harbor caribou throughout the summer/fall season, and large bulls can reliably be found there, which is one reason for its inclusion in the CCCUA. Current CCCUA protections result in fewer hunters accessing the area and also limit the impact of those hunters. As a result, Sevenmile Lake is a unique area within the CCCUA and within Unit 13 where hunters know they have a decent chance of success harvesting a large bull caribou throughout the season if they are willing to put in extra effort to hunt the area by foot. This relatively high-quality hunt is unique among Nelchina caribou opportunities and is currently available to both motorized and non-motorized hunters.

If the MST is made available to motorized hunters, the additional nine miles of trail added to the existing 1,900+ miles of motorized trails in Unit 13 will likely not alleviate the crowding complaints aired annually by users. The increased hunting traffic to Sevenmile Lake and the increased use of motorized vehicles in the area will alter caribou movements and likely drive caribou out of the area, which is a trend we observe annually in motorized areas of Unit 13. Sevenmile Lake will no longer offer a high-quality hunt opportunity for motorized or nonmotorized users, and the MST will join the ranks of all other Unit 13 motorized trails – where users complain of overcrowding and difficulty finding caribou as they are chased around on the landscape. Furthermore, DNR intends to connect the MST with the GGT. When the connection is complete, if the MST is listed as an exception to the CCCUA then motorized hunters will be able to travel from the Maclaren Summit Trailhead to Sevenmile Lake, along the edge of the lake, and back to the Denali Highway at the Glacier Gap Trail. This will further exacerbate the biological impact in the Sevenmile Lake and Maclaren Summit area and will ensure that the relatively high-quality hunt that currently exists will be eliminated. Additionally, while the old Sevenmile Lake Trail is too swampy in the lowlands, it remains a usable trail in the uplands and will quickly be discovered by MST users on the western end of Sevenmile Lake. This trail will provide motorized access to the eastern edge of the Maclaren River within the CCCUA, which is currently a refugia for moose on a landscape where surrounding areas are relatively accessible to moose hunters. Impacts on moose in this area from motorized activity and the resulting increased harvest will contribute to an already decreasing bull:cow ratio for moose in subunit 13B.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **SUPPORTS** this proposal as originally written. The department **OPPOSES** amending the proposal to allow motorized hunting on the

Maclaren Summit Trail. Allowing motorized hunting on the MST would remove protections that have been in place since 1971 for localized moose and caribou populations in 13B. Furthermore, allowing motorized hunting on the Maclaren Summit Trail will have a negative impact on the quality of hunts available to both motorized and nonmotorized hunters wishing to access the unique hunting opportunity that currently exists in the Sevenmile Lake area.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 130 –5 AAC 92.061. Special provisions for brown bear drawing permit hunts; 5 AAC 92.050. Required permit hunt conditions and procedures. Issue all nonresident permits from the nonresident allocation when there is a separate allocation for residents and nonresidents.

PROPOSED BY: Resident Hunters of Alaska

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? Place all nonresidents in the nonresident pool of applications for drawing tags in hunts with a separate allocation to nonresidents and residents.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The board has the authority to issue permits to nonresidents who are hunting with resident relatives within second degree of kindred from the resident permit allocation. This is currently only implemented for brown bear hunts in Unit 8.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If adopted, the board would no longer be able to allocate permits from the resident permit allocation to nonresidents. Drawing hunts such as those for brown bear on Kodiak would no longer include nonresident 2DK relatives in the resident drawing pool. Nonresident relatives would be included in the nonresident and nonresident alien guided applicant pool for the drawing. This would increase the number of nonresident applicants competing for a limited number of nonresident permits, and decrease the total number of applicants competing for a limited number of resident permits. Further, if adopted this proposal would likely make it more difficult for Kodiak bear guides in Exclusive Guide Use Areas to plan for a specific number of guided bear hunters.

BACKGROUND: This proposal was recently discussed at the Statewide Board of Game meeting in Anchorage in November of 2017 and deferred to the Southcentral Board of Game meeting in Anchorage in March of 2018. The proposal was deferred to Southcentral meeting because it only impacted brown bear hunts in Unit 8.

There have been recent proposals to limit the number of nonresident relatives hunting with 2DK relatives for guide required species. This has been an issue for some members of the public in regards to drawing permit hunts for sheep and brown bear where permits are very limited and

demand (i.e., number of applicants) is high. Currently, there are restrictions on the number of permits that can be awarded to 2DK nonresident relatives for the Kodiak brown bear drawing hunts. For each season (spring and fall), a maximum of four permits may be issued to nonresident hunters accompanied by a 2DK relative, and not more than one permit per individual hunt may be issued per calendar year.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on the allocation of big game hunting opportunity between resident and nonresident hunters.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

PROPOSAL 150 – 5 AAC 85.045. Seasons and bag limits for moose in Unit 18.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? The proposal would establish a registration hunt for moose in Unit 18 south of the Eek River drainage and north of the Goodnews River drainage, for residents only. The season dates would be September 1 - September 30, with a bag limit of one bull moose. Permit availability would be limited, as would the use of aircraft for transporting moose hunters and their gear.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

Currently, federal lands are closed and state managed lands are open for the month of September. Unit 18 has a positive intensive management finding, with a population objective of 1,000 - 2,000 moose, and a harvest objective of 60 - 200 moose.

There is a positive customary and traditional use finding for moose in all of Unit 18, and an amount reasonably necessary for subsistence of 200 - 400.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If adopted and the Federal Subsistence Board adopts an identical sister proposal, the proposal would align the seasons and bag limits of the state hunt with the federal hunt in the area described. The area is a checkerboard of state managed and federal lands, and it can be difficult for hunters to determine land status while in the field. Many moose are in the upriver portions of the Kanektok River drainage and those areas are almost entirely federal lands. Adoption of this proposal will also require hunters to utilize a registration permit rather than a harvest ticket, with the intent of better harvest reporting for the department.

BACKGROUND: State managed land is currently open to Alaska residents with a general season harvest ticket from Sept 1-Sept 30. Federal lands have been closed to moose hunting since 1994. In that time moose numbers have increased, from probably fewer than 10 moose to

the 173 animals that were observed in March 2018. Given this increase, there has been an increase in interest from the community of Quinhagak in liberalizing the moose hunting season. As a result of discussions with the community of Quinhagak and the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge (TNWR), an ACR was submitted to the Board of Game so that federal lands could open under a state registration permit. The department and TNWR scheduled meetings fall and winter 2018/19 with Quinhagak to discuss what type of permit conditions the community would like the department to use, but weather and other factors have prevented any of those meetings so far this year.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is NEUTRAL on this proposal to provide additional harvest opportunity; however, we support simplifying regulations where possible. Based on limited discussions with the community of Quinhagak and the TNWR, the department would issue permits only in Quinhagak during the month of August and would like to restrict airplane access within the hunt area during the hunt season.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.
