

ACR #7 – Open an antlerless moose hunt in a portion of Unit 20E.

SUBMITTED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

CITE THE REGULATION THAT WILL BE CHANGED IF THIS ACR IS HEARD.

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

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM YOU WOULD LIKE THE BOARD TO ADDRESS? STATE IN DETAIL THE NATURE OF THE CURRENT PROBLEM.

The moose population within a portion of southern Unit 20E has shown consistent growth since 2005 and has approximately doubled since then, with the cow component of the population growing at a significantly faster rate than the bull component of the population. Limited antlerless harvest would: 1) slow population growth to avoid habitat damage while ensuring long-term sustainability of the population and the increased yield it is currently capable of supporting, 2) help achieve Intensive Management harvest objectives, and 3) provide the management flexibility to rapidly respond to changes in nutrition.

WHAT SOLUTION DO YOU PREFER?

The Department of Fish and Game worked with the Upper Tanana/Fortymile Fish and Game Advisory Committee to develop the following proposed antlerless harvest framework for Unit 20E:

Unit 20E – that portion within the Ladue River drainage upstream of but excluding the South Fork of the Ladue River, the Dennison Fork of the Fortymile River drainage excluding the East Fork drainage, and the Mosquito Fork of the Fortymile River drainage.

Resident and Nonresident Hunters

August 5 – September 5 and October 15 – November 30

1 antlerless moose by youth drawing permit only; up to 100 permits may be issued; a person may not take a cow accompanied by a calf; OR

Resident Hunters

October 15 – November 30

1 antlerless moose by drawing permit only; up to 400 permits may be issued; a person may not take a cow accompanied by a calf.

STATE IN DETAIL HOW THIS ACR MEETS THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:

1) **To correct an error in regulation.**

N/A

2) **To correct an effect of a regulation that was unforeseen when a regulation was adopted.**

N/A

3) Does the request identify a biological concern for the population or a threat to meeting objectives for the population?

As this population approaches carrying capacity, stabilizing growth will prevent long-term damage to habitat and help to ensure a high yield that is sustainable long-term. The population is currently healthy, however taking this action will reduce the likelihood of having to reduce the population with limited options in the future. Implementing an antlerless hunt in this area will begin a process that will allow hunt managers to slow population growth.

There are several aspects of this population that warrant immediate attention:

First, the moose population has grown steadily since 2005. Moose densities within a 1,821 mi² area along the Taylor Highway in southern Unit 20E increased from 0.68 moose/mi² in 2005 to 1.36 moose/mi² in 2020, with an estimated annual growth rate of 4.9%. The cow segment of the population grew at an estimated 5.8% per year while the bull segment of the population, which is limited by higher natural mortality and harvest, grew at half the rate. Reducing the population growth rate will increasingly be dependent on the ability to control the growth of the female component of the population. Although twinning rates are currently nominally healthy at 39% (2018-2021 3-year weighted average), the department is closely monitoring them given the potential for twinning rates to lag as a reflection of population-level nutritional condition.

Second, if current population growth rates continue, the ability to stabilize or reduce the population in the future might be inhibited by social and logistical issues. Although portions of the area are road accessible, large portions are more remote; therefore, it may take some time to develop the capacity to effectively harvest cows within the area. This ACR would allow for more incremental change that could potentially preempt more rapid and severe management action that may be necessary to address changes in nutritional condition if the current growth rate continues unabated.

4) Does the request identify an unforeseen, unexpected event or effect that would otherwise restrict or reduce a reasonable opportunity for customary and traditional wildlife uses, as defined in AS 16.05.258(f)?

N/A

5) Does the request identify an unforeseen, unexpected resource situation where a biologically allowable resource harvest would be precluded by delayed regulatory action and such delay would be significantly burdensome because the resource would be unavailable in the future?

This ACR would allow for antlerless harvest opportunity. Delaying regulatory action now may increase the potential for the moose population to exceed carrying capacity. This could result the need for larger harvests that can often become socially difficult to implement. Furthermore, delayed action could result in density-dependent changes to demography and abundance that reduce yield through loss of productivity or density-dependent mortality.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF THIS PROBLEM IS NOT SOLVED PRIOR TO THE REGULAR CYCLE?

There will a potential loss in harvest opportunity, IM harvest objectives may not be achieved, and there will less management flexibility to respond quickly to changes in nutrition.

STATE WHY YOUR ACR IS NOT PREDOMINANTLY ALLOCATIVE.

The purpose of this ACR is to allow for antlerless harvest opportunity within a portion of Unit 20E, independent of final allocative decisions. Although the proposed regulations contain allocative components, as do all harvest regulations, the proposed allocation aligns with other antlerless moose youth and regular draw permits. The proposed antlerless harvest opportunity would be open to residents and nonresidents for the youth permit and for residents only for the regular draw permit.

IF THIS REQUEST IS ALLOCATIVE, STATE THE NEW INFORMATION THAT COMPELS THE BOARD TO CONSIDER AN ALLOCATIVE PROPOSAL OUTSIDE OF THE REGULAR CYCLE.

N/A

STATE YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE ISSUE THAT IS THE SUBJECT OF THIS ACR.

This ACR was submitted by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, which is the hunt manager for this area. The ACR was developed collaboratively with the local Advisory Committee.

STATE WHETHER THIS ACR HAS BEEN CONSIDERED BEFORE, EITHER AS A PROPOSAL OR AS AN ACR, AND IF SO, DURING WHICH BOARD OF GAME MEETING.

This ACR has not been previously considered.