

## **PROPOSAL 10**

### **5 AAC 85.030. Hunting seasons and bag limits for deer.**

Decrease the bag limit to four deer in Unit 4, Remainder as follows:

Decrease bag limit for deer in Unit 4 Remainder (the area outside of the area of Chichagof Island east of Port Frederick and north of Tenakee Inlet including all drainages into Tenakee Inlet) from six deer to four deer.

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** Decreasing the bag limit would have minimal impact on most sport hunters while reestablishing a clearer priority for federally qualified subsistence hunters. Returning the bag limit to the historically more common four deer should reduce conflict between rural and urban hunters.

Background: In 2019, the Alaska Board of Game voted to increase the deer bag limit in Unit 4 from four to six deer, replacing a four deer bag limit that had been in place since 1992. While ADF&G data suggest the Unit 4 deer populations are healthy, and that there remain populations that satisfy what the Board of Game calls “amounts necessary for subsistence,” federally qualified hunters have noted that they are finding it more difficult to meet their subsistence needs. Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act mandates that the Federal Subsistence Board ensure that “subsistence needs” are met. In the latest round of the Federal Subsistence Board process, federally qualified hunters have cited conflicts with non-federally qualified hunters, asking for broad closures of federal land to non-federally qualified hunters. To help avoid such drastic closures, advisory committees, advocacy groups, and individual Juneau hunters have volunteered to work with federally qualified hunters as well as the Federal Subsistence Board to reduce these conflicts and find compromises--this proposal represents part of that effort.

While reducing the bag limit will likely have minimal impact on the deer population or individual hunter harvests, it will encourage more conservative approaches while discouraging individuals from taking more than is needed, especially when deer populations are most vulnerable.

According to ADF&G data, from 1997-2019 the estimated average annual harvest in Unit 4 has been 5,725 deer. Harvest has remained fairly stable, with between 5,000-7,000 deer harvested annually. The exception being the severe winter of 2006/2007 when high harvest was followed by significant overwinter mortality of deer throughout Unit 4. This resulted in a precipitous decline in harvest from 7,900 deer in 2006 to 1,932 deer in 2007. Based on harvest and other indicators of deer abundance, managers believe the deer population had fully recovered by the 2013 season. Very few individual non-federally qualified hunters harvest a six deer limit in Unit 4; however, there are conditions when it is possible to take this many deer in a single day. These conditions typically coincide with deep snow, which forces the deer to the beach—that is, precisely when the deer are most vulnerable to overharvest and winterkill, as these data from the 2006/2007 winter suggest. Finally, as there is not much hunting effort in Unit 4 from hunters outside of Southeast Alaska, this change would impact almost exclusively residents of Juneau.

**PROPOSED BY:** Kevin Maier

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