

PROPOSAL 174

5 AAC 85.045(a)(11). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

Reauthorize the antlerless moose seasons in Unit 13C as follows:

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
(11)		
Unit 13		
1 moose per regulatory year, only as follows:		
...		
1 antlerless moose by drawing permit only in Unit 13(C); up to 200 permits may be issued; a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf; or	Oct. 1–Oct. 31 (General hunt only)	No open season
...		

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Antlerless moose hunts must be reauthorized annually by the board. This hunt was established during the January 2022 board meeting and as a result has not yet been held. The earliest the hunt can occur is in October of 2023, and the number of permits to be issued has not yet been determined. The current regulation allows hunters to take a limited number of cows in specific areas to keep the population and composition ratios within objectives.

Unit 13 has an active intensive management program, designed to increase moose abundance to within objectives, and increase available harvest for humans. The program has included a predation control component that began in 2004. Since the early 2000s, moose abundance in most subunits has increased until recent years when many subunits have peaked and/or stabilized at, above, or within abundance objectives.

As moose populations approach carrying capacity, the population becomes less productive, and may eventually decline. Stabilizing a population below carrying capacity allows it to remain highly productive if additional moose are removed annually. This requires harvest of both cows and bulls. The intensive management abundance objectives for moose in Unit 13 are designed to maintain moose populations in Unit 13 subunits below carrying capacity, at a more productive level. Unit 13C has reached abundance levels for which cow harvest is necessary to stabilize the population at a more productive level and allow for human harvest of excess moose. In recent years the bull-to-cow ratio in Unit 13C averages just below the objective of 25 bulls per 100 cows, suggesting that there are not additional bulls available for harvest currently. Harvest of up to 1% of the estimated cow moose population in 13C would allow for roughly 23 cow moose to be harvested

annually in recent years.

Harvest objectives for 13C are 155–350 moose, but those objectives have not been met since 1995, when 154 moose were harvested, and 1996, when 169 moose were harvested. The only other years when harvest exceeded 150 moose was in 1989 (154 harvested), and 1988 (199 harvested), which was the most moose ever reported harvested in a single year in 13C. As moose abundance in 13C increased above objectives in recent years, harvest peaked at 117 moose in 2014. Evidence suggests that the current moose harvest objectives for 13C may not be attainable due primarily to accessibility. Harvest of excess cow moose to stabilize the 13C population will increase overall harvest and provide additional opportunity for hunters to harvest cows as well as additional bulls.

If antlerless moose hunting opportunities are not reauthorized in Unit 13C, the intensive management program and objectives will likely need to be restructured to maintain the moose population within a population size range that does not result in nutritional limitations for the moose and to achieve the harvest objectives recommended by the public, advisory committees, and the board.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

(HQ-F22-052)
