

PROPOSAL 20

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

Split Etolin Island in Unit 3 into two hunt areas for elk as follows:

I would like to recommend Etolin Island be split into two hunt areas. The dividing line would extend from Anita Bay through Burnett Inlet. This would result in a hunt area south of Anita Bay and east of Burnett Inlet which currently attracts the vast majority of effort and harvest. The remainder of Etolin Island north of Anita Bay and West of Burnett Inlet would be a second area. There has been historic harvest in Steamer Bay, Rocky Bay, Three Way Passage and Mosman Inlet.

I would suggest that the archery and registration hunts remain the same, however, the October hunts would include the two new hunt areas. I would also recommend that the current up to maximum of 50 draw permits for DE321 and DE323 would be split with the new subunit to include DE322 and DE324. The split would be determined by the area management biologist.

My suggested split is referenced below.

Unit/Area

Hunt Area 1

Etolin Island area bounded by a line from Anita Bay to Zimovia Strait, running north to the intersection of Chichagof Passage, west along Chichagof passage to Stikine Strait to the intersection of Clarence Strait, south to Stan Hope Island, east to Fawn Island and north up through Burnett Inlet.

One bull by permit DE331, Oct 1st- Oct 15th, up to 10 permits

One bull by permit DE 333, Oct 15th-Oct31st, up to 10 permits

Hunt Area 2

Etolin Island area bounded by a line from the intersection of Clarence Strait and Ernest Sound, a line running northeast excluding Niblack Islands to the intersection of Zimovia Strait, north to Anita Bay. From Anita Bay south to Burnett Inlet, east of Fawn Island, west to Stan Hope Island, extending to the intersection of Clarence Strait southeast to the intersection of Clarence Strait and Ernest Sound.

One bull by permit DE321, Oct 1st – Oct 15th, up to 40 permits

One bull by permit DE 323, Oct 16th – Oct 31st, up to 40 permits

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The current October hunt structure and level of participation, particularly from Alaska residents and more specifically from southeast Alaska residents is causing congestion, burdensome competition, a loss of hunt aesthetics, resulting in potentially dangerous situations. I would recommend a change in hunt structure to help alleviate these issues.

The vast majority of effort is isolated to the southern end of Etolin Island from Canoe Pass to McHenry Inlet and the mountain peaks and drainages from Mount Shakes, Navy Peak, McHenry Lake and Mt. Etolin. It isn't uncommon to have multiple hunting parties pursuing elk in the same bowl, drainage, beach, inlet or mountain range.

Effort is focused in these areas because of historic harvest and access. In the mid 2000's an average of seven to eight elk were harvested per year by about 50 hunters. In the last several years the harvest rate has been similar but with around 75 hunters participating. The majority of the hunters are hunting in October and with the condensed two week draw seasons crowding is often the result.

Management of this small, isolated elk herd is largely done through harvest data due to the significant difficulty in estimating the population due to the thick old growth habitat and forested drainages of south Etolin. Due to fiscal constraints, weather, time, distance and habitat, it is exceedingly difficult to accurately estimate elk on Etolin.

By splitting Etolin into two hunt areas and dividing the available up to draw permits I believe it will spread out effort (improve aesthetics, limit conflicts), lead to other viable hunt options (increased opportunity) and provide the Department of Fish and Game with valuable information to better manage the herd I would request the Board consider the following changes to the existing hunt structure to reduce crowding, potential conflict and to restore the aesthetics of the hunt.

PROPOSED BY: Matt Allen

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