

Antlerless Moose & Brown Bear Tag Fee Reauthorizations for Other Regions

PROPOSAL 173

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

Reauthorize the antlerless moose seasons in Unit 13A 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(A); 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 Mar. 1–Mar. 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. The current regulation allows hunters to take a limited number of cows in specific areas to keep the population and composition ratios within objectives.

This Unit 13 antlerless hunt was initially adopted in March 2011, and the first Unit 13 antlerless hunt under this regulation took place in September 2012. The hunt was modified when the Board of Game adopted an October and March season during the February 2013 board meeting.

Since the establishment of this hunt, the department has issued 10 permits annually in Unit 13A. The department intentionally limited the number of permits issued annually to gain public support for the hunt, even though a higher rate of cow harvest was desirable to regulate the moose population within objectives. After considering a proposal during the 2015 Board of Game meeting, which was submitted by the public to increase the number of cow permits issued annually, the board directed the department to issue enough permits to allow the harvest of up to one percent of the cow population, when the moose population is above the midpoint of the population objective for the subunit. Twenty permits were issued for regulatory year (RY) 2020 and 25 permits were issued for RY21.

The current population objective for Unit 13A is 3,500–4,200, and the population was estimated to be above objective in 2015 and 2016, within the higher end of the objectives in 2017–2020. In

2021 the 13A moose population was estimated to be above the objectives, and the 3-year average remains just within the higher end of the objectives. The antlerless hunt in western Unit 13A contributes to maintaining the moose population within the intensive management objectives. The additional harvest provided through this hunt will also assist in achieving the harvest objectives for the population.

If antlerless moose hunting opportunities are not reauthorized in Unit 13A, 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-F22-053)

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)

PROPOSAL 175

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

Reauthorize the antlerless moose seasons in Unit 13E 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(E); 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 predator 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 13E 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.

The moose abundance index indicated fewer than 4,000 moose in Unit 13E in 2000 but the population has been increasing since then and the current abundance is well above the abundance objectives of 5,000 to 6,000 moose. Harvest levels increased with the increase in abundance, but harvest levels remain below the harvest objectives of 300 to 600 moose. Bull-to-cow ratios are at the objective of 25 bulls to 100 cows. Additional harvest has been requested by the public for Unit 13E but cannot be obtained without harvesting some cows. Cow moose harvest opportunity will provide for the reduction of moose abundance to within objectives before the population becomes nutritionally stressed and experiences a decline due to nutritional constraints. Furthermore, harvest of cows will allow for additional bull harvest without compromising bull-to-cow ratios, and populations under sustained-yield management are more productive with both bull and cow harvest.

If antlerless moose hunting opportunities are not reauthorized in Unit 13E, 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.

PROPOSAL 176

5 AAC 84.045(a)(12). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

Reauthorize the antlerless moose draw permits in Units 14A and 14B as follows:

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
(12)		
Unit 14(A)		
1 moose per regulatory year, only as follows:		
...		
1 antlerless moose by drawing permit only; up to 2,000 antlerless moose permits may be issued; or	Aug. 20–Sept. 25 (General hunt only) Nov. 1–Dec. 25 (General hunt only)	No open season
1 moose by targeted permit only; by crossbow, shotgun or bow and arrow only; up to 200 permits may be issued	Winter season to be announced (General hunt only)	No open season
Unit 14(B)		
1 moose per regulatory year, only as follows:		
...		
1 moose by targeted permit only; by crossbow, shotgun, or bow and arrow only; up to 100 permits may be issued.	Winter season to be announced (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. There are two types of antlerless moose hunts in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley – a drawing permit hunt used to regulate growth of the moose

population in Unit 14A, and targeted hunts used to mitigate public safety concerns in Units 14A and 14B.

Moose surveys conducted in November 2020 yielded an estimate of 7,112 moose in Unit 14A. This estimate was greater than the post-hunt objective of 6,000–6,500 moose and less than the 2019 survey estimate of 7,900 moose indicating that the increased antlerless harvests are having the desired effect of reducing the population. A sex and age composition of the 2020 survey demonstrated a bull ratio of 30 bulls:100 cows and a calf ratio of 36 calves:100 cows.

Antlerless moose hunts have been authorized in Unit 14A since 2001 in order to regulate the growth of the population. The permit level was increased from 450 to 1,000 in 2013 to account for the continued increase in the population and again in spring 2018 from 1,000 to 2,000. Continued increased harvest based on the increased permit levels is expected to bring the population back to within the objective for the unit of 6,000–6,500.

The current increases in the harvest have seemingly slowed the population growth; however, it has not reduced the moose population to within objectives. An increase the number of moose-human conflicts is anticipated as the moose density increases, and moose may experience nutritional stress as the population nears carrying capacity. Cow harvests are warranted to control the moose population’s growth and recommended to provide additional moose hunting opportunity in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley.

The targeted moose hunts in Units 14A and 14B are an effective tool to address public safety concerns related to moose-vehicle collision and nuisance management issues. Moose-vehicle collisions result in property damage and may result in human injury or death. An average of 338 moose per year were killed in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley area during the last five years of average snowfall and substantially more are killed during higher snowfall years. ADF&G also receives periodic complaints from the public about crop depredation and aggressive behavior that can be mitigated by this hunt structure.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F22-047)

PROPOSAL 177

5 AAC 85.045(a)(15). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

Reauthorize the antlerless moose season in Unit 17A as follows:

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
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(15)

Unit 17(A)

Up to 2 moose per regulatory year only as follows:

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 moose by registration permit only; or Aug. 25–Sept. 25 (Subsistence hunt only)

1 antlered bull by registration permit only; or Jan. 1 – Last day of Feb. (Subsistence hunt only)

1 antlerless moose by registration permit only; Jan. 1 – Last day of Feb. (Subsistence hunt only)

...

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Antlerless moose hunts must be reauthorized annually by the board. The goal is to provide for a wide range of public uses and benefits, and to protect the health and habitat of moose populations. Antlerless hunts are important for improving or maintaining the ability of moose habitat to support current populations. They also help regulate moose population growth, help to meet Intensive Management (IM) objectives for high levels of harvest, and provide subsistence hunters with a reasonable opportunity to pursue moose for subsistence uses without reducing bull-to-cow ratios. The board adopted an antlerless moose hunt in 2013 after hearing many comments from heavily invested groups such as the Bristol Bay Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Council, the Nushagak and Togiak Fish and Game Advisory Committees, and the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge.

The Unit 17A moose management plan calls for antlerless moose hunting opportunity when the population is above 600 moose and increasing. When the population exceeds 1,200 moose, a bag limit of up to two moose is needed to provide increased opportunity and to reduce moose abundance to protect habitat. Based on the most recent survey with good conditions in March 2017, there is a population estimate of 1,990 ±437 moose. The bag limit of two moose and antlerless harvest opportunity provide a mechanism to limit population growth and allow hunters to harvest surplus animals.

The moose population in subunit 17A is growing and can sustain additional harvest; however, the objectives for this population include allowing it to expand into neighboring areas to provide additional harvest opportunities. This population is currently contributing to the growth of adjacent moose populations, especially to the north and west.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F22-050)

PROPOSAL 178

5 AAC 85.045(a)(16). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

Reauthorize the resident antlerless moose season in Unit 18 as follows:

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
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(16)

...

Unit 18, that portion that drains into Kuskokwim Bay south of the Carter Bay drainage

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

...

1 moose by registration Permit only; to be announced by emergency order

Dec. 1—Mar. 31 (Season to be announced)

No open season.

Remainder of Unit 18

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

2 moose; of which only 1 may be an antlered bull; a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf; or

Aug. 1—Sept. 30

2 antlerless moose; or

Oct. 1—Nov. 30.

2 moose

Dec. 1—April 30.

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

...

1 antlerless moose

Dec. 1—Mar. 15

...

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? To be retained, the antlerless moose seasons in Unit 18 must be reauthorized annually. The current antlerless hunts in the Remainder of Unit 18 were adopted at the January 2014 Board of Game meeting in Kotzebue. The current antlerless hunt in the Goodnews Hunt area, and the nonresident antlerless hunt, were both adopted at the January 2017 Board of Game meeting in Bethel. The board has previously reauthorized the antlerless moose season for resident hunts in Unit 18 Remainder for regulatory year (RY) 2016 through RY2021. This proposal requests reauthorization of all antlerless hunts for RY2023.

Implementation of antlerless hunts began in 2006 and has continued each year due to increased moose abundance and continued high reproductive rates along the Yukon River drainage in Unit 18. Based on the steady growth in moose abundance, ADF&G proposes continued antlerless moose hunts in the Remainder of Unit 18.

Within the areas near the Yukon River, the moose population is estimated at a minimum of 23,000 animals with calf:cow ratios ranging from 36:100 to 61:100, and twinning rates from 18% to 36% for all areas. Population growth continues in this portion of Unit 18 and anecdotal evidence suggests that calf survival rates were high for the winter of 2021-2022. The population is expected to continue to grow with high recruitment and adult survival.

Although the current year harvest data in the Remainder of Unit 18 has not been finalized due to the early proposal deadline, harvest is expected to be similar to the past four years and well within sustained yield for this robust population. Allowing antlerless harvest will benefit hunters through increased opportunity, and any increases in harvest may help slow the growth rate of the population in this portion of Unit 18.

The moose population in the Goodnews River drainage had grown steadily in the past 15 years following a closure in 2004. The fall hunt has had a quota of 10 moose in the first few years of the hunt and recently increased to 30. The season has not been closed by emergency order and the past few years the quota was not met. In the two years that the winter hunt has been held, harvest has been low (only five moose harvested in RY2017 and none in RY2018). The population now is over 400 moose and based on the steady growth in moose abundance, ADF&G proposes continued antlerless moose hunts in the Goodnews River Drainage.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F22-039)

PROPOSAL 179

5 AAC 85.045(a)(17). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

Reauthorize a winter antlerless moose season during February in a portion of Unit 19D as follows.

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
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(17)

...

Unit 19(D), that portion upstream of the Selatna River, excluding the Black River

1 moose, by registration permit only, a person may not take a cow accompanied by a calf

Feb 1 – Last day of Feb.

No open season.

...

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Antlerless moose hunting seasons must be reauthorized annually. The goal is to provide additional harvest opportunity and meet harvest objectives.

The moose population in Unit 19D East has approximately doubled since predator removals began in 2003. Prior to intensive management, bull-to-cow ratios along the Kuskokwim River drainage were measured at 18 bulls per 100 cows. After predator reductions and a closure of moose hunting in the Bear Control Focus Area (BCFA), ratios improved to 39 bulls per 100 cows by 2007. By 2020 ratios had declined again and the two-year average was 17 bulls per 100 cows.

To maintain a healthy and productive moose population, department research (Boertje et al. 2007) indicates that when the 2-year average twinning rate is 11–20% populations should be stabilized. Twinning rates in Unit 19D East remained high until 2015 (30-40%); however, the current 2-year average twinning rate is now 19%, indicating a lower nutritional status in this population. The current Intensive Management plan for Unit 19D East calls for stabilization of the population through harvest when the 2-year average twinning rate is between 15 and 20%.

Additional harvest opportunity is available. Winter hunts distribute hunter pressure and allow access to areas inaccessible in the fall.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F22-046)

PROPOSAL 180

5 AAC 85.045(a)(18). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

Reauthorize the antlerless moose seasons in Unit 20A as follows:

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season Subsistence and General Hunts	Nonresident Open Season
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(18)

Unit 20(A), the Ferry Trail Management Area, Wood River Controlled Use Area, and the Yanert Controlled Use Area

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

...

1 antlerless moose by drawing permit only; up to 2,000 permits may be issued in combination with the Remainder of Unit 20(A); a person may not take a cow accompanied by a calf; or

Aug. 15–Nov. 15

1 antlerless moose by registration permit only; a person may not take a cow accompanied by a calf; or

Oct. 1–Feb. 28

...

1 moose by targeted permit only; by crossbow shotgun, or bow and arrow only; up to 100 permits may be issued

Season to be announced by emergency order

...

Remainder of Unit 20(A)

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

...

1 antlerless moose by drawing permit only; up to 2,000 permits may be issued in combination with Unit 20(A), the Ferry Trail Management Area, Wood River Controlled Use Area, and the Yanert Controlled Use Area; a person may not take a cow accompanied by a calf; or

Aug. 15–Nov. 15

1 antlerless moose by registration permit only; a person may not take a cow accompanied by a calf; or

Aug. 25–last day of Feb.

...

1 moose by targeted permit only; by crossbow, shotgun, or bow and arrow only; up to 100 permits may be issued

Season to be announced by emergency order

...

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Antlerless moose hunting seasons must be reauthorized annually. Antlerless hunts are important for maintaining the moose population at levels that the habitat can support. Antlerless hunts also help regulate moose population growth, help to meet Intensive Management (IM) objectives for high levels of harvest, and provide subsistence hunters with a reasonable opportunity to pursue moose for subsistence uses without reducing bull-to-cow ratios.

If antlerless moose hunts are not reauthorized, the moose population could increase to levels beyond the ability of the habitat to support the moose population. Allowing the population to grow beyond what the habitat can support may require the population to be reduced dramatically to avoid long term habitat damage. Opportunity to hunt a harvestable surplus of cow moose would be lost, and the ability to meet IM harvest objectives could be compromised. Subsistence hunters in the portion of Unit 20A outside the Fairbanks nonsubsistence area (part of the western Tanana Flats) may not have a reasonable opportunity to pursue moose for subsistence uses.

Reauthorizing antlerless moose hunts will allow hunting opportunity and harvest to increase and allow the Department of Fish and Game to manage the moose populations at an optimum level. The additional harvest will help in meeting IM harvest objectives without reducing bull-to-cow ratios. Meat and subsistence hunters will benefit from the opportunity to harvest cow moose. Moose populations will benefit by maintaining moose densities at a level compatible with their habitat. Motorists and residents may benefit from reduced moose–vehicle collisions and moose–human conflicts.

The current objective is to maintain moose numbers within the IM population objective of 10,000–15,000 moose, while monitoring indicators of moose and habitat condition for positive density-dependent responses. The Unit 20A population was estimated at between 12,100–15,900 moose (90% confidence interval) in November 2021. There is an estimated 5,040 mi² of moose habitat in Unit 20A which equates to a moose density of between 2.4 and 3.2 moose/mi². The median of this estimate falls within the IM population objective but at the upper end. The department does not want the population to further increase because of concerns about density effects such as twinning rates below 20% and short-yearling weights below 400 pounds, both of which indicate a nutritionally stressed population. The department will continue to monitor Unit 20A twinning rates and short yearling weights and may recommend fewer antlerless hunts in the

future if these two thresholds are surpassed. However, at the current density of moose the intention is to harvest moose at a rate of 1% of the population which has been shown to stabilize the moose population at its current level. Antlerless harvest will be by drawing permits for a majority of Unit 20A and a registration permit outside the Fairbanks nonsubsistence area in northwest Unit 20A near Nenana. The harvest objective will be based on the most recent survey results. The three-year average antlerless moose harvest in Unit 20A is 80 moose. The department did not issue antlerless moose permits in 2022 because of a severe 2021/2022 winter and the anticipated high mortality. The department will evaluate overwinter survival and other factors throughout 2022 and early winter 2023 to determine if and how many antlerless permits will be issued in fall 2023.

The number of moose in Unit 20A was estimated at 17,768 (3.5 moose/mi²) in 2003. Research indicated this high-density moose population was experiencing density-dependent effects, including low productivity, relatively light calf weights, and high removal rates of winter forage. The objective beginning in regulatory year 2004–2005 (RY04) was to reduce moose numbers to the population objective of 10,000–12,000 moose (1.5–1.8 moose/mi²) unless indicators of moose condition showed signs of improvement at higher densities. In 2016, the Board of Game adopted the IM population objective of 10,000–15,000 moose and the 2021 population estimate is within the IM objective.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F22-045)

PROPOSAL 181

5 AAC 85.045(a)(18). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

Reauthorize the antlerless moose seasons in Unit 20B as follows:

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season Subsistence and General Hunts	Nonresident Open Season
(18)		
...		
Unit 20(B), that portion within Creamer’s Refuge		
...		
1 antlerless moose by bow and arrow only, by drawing permit only; up to 150 bow and arrow permits may be issued in the Fairbanks Management Area; a recipient of a drawing permit is prohibited from taking an antlered bull moose in the Fairbanks Management Area; or	Sept. 1–Nov. 27 (General hunt only)	Sept. 1–Nov. 27

<p>1 antlerless moose by muzzle-loader by drawing permit only; up to 10 permits may be issued; a recipient of a drawing permit is prohibited from taking an antlered bull moose in the Fairbanks Management Area</p>	<p>Dec. 1–Jan. 31 (General hunt only)</p>	<p>Dec. 1–Jan. 31</p>
<p>Unit 20(B), remainder of the Fairbanks Management Area</p>		
<p>...</p>		
<p>1 antlerless moose by bow and arrow only, by drawing permit only; up to 150 bow and arrow permits may be issued in the Fairbanks Management Area; a recipient of a drawing permit is prohibited from taking an antlered bull moose in the Fairbanks Management Area; or</p>	<p>Sept. 1–Nov. 27 (General hunt only)</p>	<p>Sept. 1–Nov. 27</p>
<p>1 moose by targeted permit only; up to 100 permits may be issued</p>	<p>Season to be announced by emergency order (General hunt only)</p>	<p>No open season.</p>
<p>Unit 20(B), that portion within the Minto Flats Management Area</p>		
<p>RESIDENT HUNTERS:</p>		
<p>...</p>		
<p>1 antlerless moose by registration permit only</p>	<p>Oct. 15–Feb. 28 (Subsistence hunt only)</p>	<p>No open season.</p>
<p>...</p>		
<p>Unit 20(B), the drainage of the Middle Fork of the Chena River</p>		
<p>1 antlerless moose by drawing permit only; up to 300 permits may be issued; a person may not take a cow accompanied by a calf; or</p>	<p>Aug. 15–Nov. 15 (General hunt only)</p>	

1 antlerless moose by registration permit only; a person may not take a cow accompanied by a calf; or	Oct. 1–Last day of Feb. (General hunt only)	No open season.
...		
Unit 20(B), that portion southeast of the Moose Creek dike within one-half mile of each side of the Richardson highway		
...		
1 moose by drawing permit only; by crossbow, bow and arrow, or muzzleloader only; up to 100 permits may be issued; or	Sept. 16–Last day of Feb. (General hunt only)	No open season.
1 moose by targeted permit only; by crossbow, shotgun, or bow and arrow only; up to 100 permits may be issued	Season to be announced by emergency order	No open season.
Remainder of Unit 20(B)		
1 antlerless moose by drawing permit only; by youth hunt only; up to 200 permits may be issued; or	Aug. 5–Aug. 14 (General hunt only)	No open season
...		
1 antlerless moose by drawing permit only; up to 1,500 permits may be issued in the remainder of Unit 20(B); a person may not take a cow accompanied by a calf; or	Aug. 15–Nov. 15 (General hunt only)	No open season.
1 antlerless moose by registration permit only; a person may not take a cow accompanied by a calf; or	Oct. 1– Last day of Feb.	
1 moose by targeted permit only; by crossbow, shotgun, or bow and arrow only; up to 100 permits may be issued	Season to be announced by emergency order (General hunt only)	No open season.
...		

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Antlerless moose hunting seasons must be reauthorized annually. The goal is to provide for a wide range of public uses and benefits, and to protect the health and habitat of moose populations. Antlerless hunts are important for improving or maintaining the ability of moose habitat to support current populations. They also help regulate moose population growth, help to meet Intensive Management (IM) objectives for high levels of harvest, and provide subsistence hunters with a reasonable opportunity to pursue moose for subsistence uses without reducing bull-to-cow ratios.

If antlerless moose hunts are not reauthorized, the moose population may exceed population objectives causing habitat degradation and a loss of opportunity to hunt a surplus of antlerless moose. Furthermore, subsistence hunters in the portion of Unit 20B in the Minto Flats Management Area may not have a reasonable opportunity to pursue moose for subsistence uses.

The reauthorization of antlerless moose hunts in Unit 20B will allow the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) to manage the moose population within the population objectives of 12,000 to 15,000 moose. Hunting opportunity and harvest will increase and allow ADF&G to manage this moose population at optimum levels. The additional harvest is necessary to meet intensive management harvest objectives while maintaining bull-to-cow ratios within objectives. Subsistence hunters will have reasonable opportunity to harvest cow moose. Moose populations will benefit by maintaining moose densities at levels compatible with their habitat. Motorists and residents may benefit from reduced moose–vehicle collisions and moose–human conflicts.

The moose population level in Unit 20B is currently within the population objective of 12,000–15,000 moose. The population declined from an estimated 20,173 moose in 2009 to 11,064 in 2015, due in large part to antlerless moose hunts designed to lower the population to those objectives. The population increased slightly to 12,871 moose in 2017 and was estimated at 12,479 in 2020. To maintain the current population level the department recommends limited antlerless hunts in the Minto Flats Management Area (MFMA) and the Fairbanks Management Area (FMA). The department will continue to monitor the moose population and may implement additional antlerless hunts if the population continues to trend upward.

Fairbanks Management Area (FMA)—The purpose of this antlerless hunt is to regulate population growth in the FMA and reduce potential moose–vehicle collisions and nuisance moose problems.

The number of moose–vehicle collisions in the FMA is high and they pose significant safety risks to motorists. In addition, moose nuisance issues continue to place significant demands on property owners. To increase hunting opportunity and harvest and reduce moose–vehicle collisions, the department incrementally increased the number of drawing permits for antlerless moose in the FMA during RY99–RY10. Moose–vehicle collisions and moose nuisance problems have remained lower since, presumably, in part due to consistent antlerless moose harvests.

Minto Flats Management Area (MFMA)—The primary purpose of this antlerless hunt is to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses and to regulate the moose population in the MFMA.

The MFMA moose density was high in 2010 (4.4 moose/mi²). To reduce the moose population, the harvest of antlerless moose during RY12 and RY13 was about 2.5% of the population. The fall 2015, 2017, and 2019 estimates showed more appropriate densities of 1.6, 1.7, and 2.0

moose/mi², respectively. Because the population level has been stable and within the population objectives, the antlerless harvest has been reduced to approximately 1% of the total population to maintain the current population level.

Targeted Hunt—The purpose of the targeted hunt is to allow the public to harvest moose that are causing nuisance or public safety issues. These permits are used sparingly but allow the public to harvest the moose instead of the department just dispatching them.

Due to severe winter weather and anticipated high levels of natural mortality, the department did not issue antlerless moose drawing permits for certain hunts within Unit 20B for fall of 2022, and does not intend to hold the fall antlerless registration hunt in the MFMA. Reauthorization of these antlerless hunts is needed to retain the management options, as described for each hunt, to maintain appropriate moose abundance levels. The department will evaluate overwinter survival in the area along with other factors throughout 2022 and early winter 2023 to determine if and how many antlerless permits will be issued in Fall 2023.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F22-044)

PROPOSAL 182

5 AAC 85.045(a)(18). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

Reauthorize the antlerless moose hunting seasons in Unit 20D as follows:

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
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(18)

...

Unit 20(D), that portion lying west of the west bank of the Johnson River and south of the north bank of the Tanana River, except the Delta Junction Management Area and the Bison Range **Controlled Use Area** [YOUTH HUNT MANAGEMENT AREA]

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

...

1 antlerless moose by drawing permit only; up to 1,000 permits may be issued in combination with that portion in the Delta Junction Management Area; a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf; or

Oct. 10–Nov. 25
(General hunt only)

1 antlerless moose by registration permit only; a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf

Oct. 10–Nov. 25
(General hunt only)

...

Unit 20(D), that portion within the Bison Range Controlled Use Area

...

1 bull with spike-fork or 50-inch antlers or antlers with 4 or more brow tines on one side; or 1 antlerless moose, per lifetime of a hunter, by youth hunt drawing permit only; up to 10 permits may be issued; a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf;

Sept. 1–Sept. 30
(General hunt only)

Sept. 1–Sept. 30

Unit 20(D), that portion within the Delta Junction Management Area

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 moose every four regulatory years by drawing permit only, a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf; or

Sept. 1–Sept. 15
(General hunt only)

...

1 antlerless moose by drawing permit only; up to 1,000 permits may be issued in combination with that portion lying west of the west bank of the Johnson River and south of the north bank of the Tanana River; a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf; or

Oct. 10–Nov. 25
(General hunt only)

1 antlerless moose by registration permit only; a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf

Oct. 10–Nov. 25
(General hunt only)

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 moose every four regulatory years by drawing permit only, a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf; or

Sept. 1–Sept. 15

...

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Antlerless moose hunts must be reauthorized annually. The objectives of the Unit 20D antlerless moose hunts are to 1) stabilize population growth of this high-density moose population; 2) address concerns about range degradation, reduced nutritional condition, and reduced reproductive success; 3) make progress toward meeting the Unit 20D intensive management (IM) harvest objective of 500–700 moose; and 4) provide youth and disabled veteran hunting opportunity.

If antlerless moose hunts are not reauthorized, the moose population could quickly increase to levels beyond the ability of the habitat to support the moose population. Opportunity to hunt a harvestable surplus of cow moose would be lost, and the ability to meet IM harvest objectives could be compromised. Additionally, the population may need to be reduced dramatically if populations increase substantially.

Antlerless moose hunts have been conducted in southwest Unit 20D, which has the highest moose density in the unit. This area has demonstrated population growth due to an abundance of high-quality moose habitat created from extensive land clearing for agricultural use and multiple wildfires over the past 30 years. Total moose harvest in all of Unit 20D averaged 270 moose (an average of 252 bulls and 18 antlerless moose) during regulatory years 2018 and 2019.

Antlerless hunting opportunity is limited at present because this opportunity helps to maintain the moose population within the ability of habitat to support the population. The 2020 population estimate for southwest Unit 20D was 3,399 moose (corrected for sightability) with a density of 3.3 moose per square mile, 32 calves:100 cows and 23 bulls:100 cows. The population has been relatively stable for a decade. Bull:cow ratios have been below 30:100 for the past 5 years, and twinning rates are among the lowest observed in the state (<10%).

Continued antlerless harvest will likely be needed to maintain the population at the optimal density and will help make progress toward the IM harvest objective of 500–700 moose without reducing bull-to-cow ratios below the management objectives. The population trend and harvest rate suggest the low, consistent antlerless harvest provided by the drawing permit hunts in Unit 20D, in conjunction with other mortality factors, is an appropriate rate of antlerless moose mortality that contributes to stability in the southwest Unit 20D moose population. The department did not issue antlerless moose drawing permits in southwest 20D for the fall of 2022 due to the severity of the 2021/2022 winter and the anticipated increase in natural mortality. The department will evaluate browse removal, twinning rates and abundance and other factors throughout 2022 and early winter 2023 to determine if and how many antlerless permits will be issued in fall 2023.

The department will continue to evaluate antlerless moose hunts and their effect on moose density and population growth while monitoring indices of density-dependent moose nutritional conditions in relation to changes in moose density, including proportional removal of current annual growth of winter browse, proportion of females with twin calves, and late-winter calf weights.

Additional drawing or registration permits will be issued only if more harvest is needed in specific areas to maintain optimal moose densities.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F22-043)

PROPOSAL 183

5 AAC 85.045(a)(18). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

Reauthorize the antlerless moose seasons in Unit 20E as follows:

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
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(18)

...

Unit 20(E), the remainder of
of the Ladue River Controlled
Use Area

RESIDENT HUNTERS

...

1 antlerless moose by
drawing permit only; by youth
hunt only; up to 100 permits
may be issued in combination
with the nonresident drawing

Aug. 5–Sept. 5
(General hunt only)
Oct. 15–Nov. 30
(General hunt only)

hunt; a person may not take a cow accompanied by a calf; or

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

Oct. 15–Nov. 30
(General hunt only)

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

...

1 antlerless moose by drawing permit only; by youth hunt only; up to 100 permits may be issued in combination with the nonresident drawing hunt; a person may not take a cow accompanied by a calf

Aug. 5–Sept. 5
Oct. 15–Nov. 30

Unit 20(E), that portion outside of the Ladue River Controlled Use draining into the Ladue River upstream of the South Fork of the Ladue River, the Dennison Fork of the Fortymile River, and the Mosquito Fork of the Fortymile River drainage.

RESIDENT HUNTERS

...

1 antlerless moose by drawing permit only; by youth hunt only; up to 100 permits may be issued in combination with the nonresident drawing hunt; a person may not take a cow accompanied by a calf; or

Aug. 5–Sept. 5
(General hunt only)
Oct. 15–Nov. 30
(General hunt only)

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

Oct. 15–Nov. 30
(General hunt only)

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

...

1 antlerless moose by drawing permit only; by youth hunt only; up to 100 permits may be issued in combination with the nonresident drawing hunt; a person may not take a cow accompanied by a calf

Aug. 5–Sept. 5
Oct. 15–Nov. 30

...

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Antlerless moose hunting seasons must be reauthorized annually. The Unit 20E antlerless moose hunts were originally passed by the Board of Game in March 2022, and the primary objectives of the hunts are: 1) slow population growth to avoid habitat damage, 2) help achieve Intensive Management (IM) harvest objectives, and 3) provide the management flexibility to rapidly respond to changes in nutrition.

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. 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. Slowing the population growth rate in order to avoid habitat damage is largely dependent on the ability to control the growth of the female component of the population.

Antlerless harvest will help achieve IM harvest objectives without reducing bull:cow ratios below management objectives. The Unit 20E IM harvest objective is 250–450 moose, and the RY17–RY21 annual average unit-wide reported harvest was 209 moose. Unless nutritional indices decline, the department’s general goal is to harvest 1% or less of the moose population within the antlerless hunt area, which equates to approximately 30 or less moose. This level of harvest would contribute substantially to meeting IM harvest objectives.

Moose nutritional levels are currently healthy in Unit 20E, and the antlerless harvest framework provides management flexibility to rapidly respond to potential future changes in nutrition. Twinning rates are currently 39% (2018-2021 3-year weighted average), and the department closely monitors these rates given the potential for them to lag as a reflection of population-level nutritional condition. The antlerless harvest framework not only provides the ability for the department to rapidly respond to potential future changes in twinning rates (or other nutritional indices), but it also provides the ability to proactively reduce population growth rates in order to maintain the current high nutritional levels.

If the Unit 20E antlerless moose hunts are not reauthorized, and the population growth rates from the last 15 years continue, the ability to stabilize or reduce the population in the future might be inhibited by logistical and social issues. For example, although portions of the area are road

accessible, large portions are more remote, and there are logistical challenges to distributing harvest (especially higher levels of harvest) throughout the area. Furthermore, if past growth rates continue unabated and nutritional condition declines, social challenges could occur if more rapid and severe management action (e.g., high number of hunters) was necessary.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F22-042)

PROPOSAL 184

5 AAC 85.045(a)(19)(B). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

Reauthorize a winter antlerless moose season during March in a portion of Unit 21D as follows:

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
-----------------------------	---	------------------------------------

(19)

Unit 21(D), that portion south of the South bank of the Yukon River, downstream of the up-river entrance of Kala Slough and west of Kala Creek

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

...

1 moose, by registration permit only, up to 15 days during March; a person may not take a cow accompanied by a calf

(Winter season to be announced)

...

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Antlerless moose hunting seasons must be reauthorized annually. The goal is to provide additional harvest opportunity and meet harvest objectives. This harvest opportunity of antlerless moose recently emerged because the moose population in the Kaiyuh Flats is increasing rapidly, especially the number of cows in the population. If this antlerless moose hunt is not reauthorized, opportunity to utilize a harvestable surplus of cow moose would be lost, and our ability to meet Intensive Management (IM) harvest objectives could be reduced. In addition, rather than allow the population to go through dramatic rates of expansion and contraction, it is prudent to dampen the current accelerating rate of increase.

The Intensive Management (IM) harvest objective for Unit 21D is 450–1,000 moose. The 10-year average estimated harvest during 2012–2021 was 401 moose, which includes the reported and estimated unreported harvest. The annual estimated harvest has not met the harvest objective since 2003 when the estimated harvest was 489 moose. Additional harvest from this hunt will help make

progress toward achieving the IM harvest objectives without reducing bull-to-cow ratios to low levels. Subsistence hunters will benefit from the opportunity to harvest cow moose.

Analysis of three Trend Count Areas (Squirrel Creek, Pilot Mountain, and Kaiyuh Slough TCAs) within the Kaiyuh Flats in this hunt area increased in moose abundance among all age classes, and adult moose abundance was 32% above the 18-year average by 2021. Geospatial Population Estimate data also increased from 1,897 ($\pm 11\%$) moose in 2011 to 4,116 ($\pm 10\%$) moose in 2017. Moose twinning data for the hunt area also showed high twinning rates between 2004 and 2021 (avg. = 36%), although the 5-year twinning rate average (2017-2021) was 29%.

The portion of 21D affected by this reauthorization is approximately 21% (2,559 mi²) of Unit 21D (12,093.6 mi²). Moose abundance in this area was estimated at 4,000–4,500 moose, which is approximately 39–44% of the total moose estimated in Unit 21D at 10,478 moose ($\pm 1,572$) in 2021. The mid-point for the total 21D moose population estimate was above the IM population objective for all of Unit 21D (12,093.6 mi²) of 9,000–10,000 moose.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F22-041)

PROPOSAL 185

5 AAC 85.045(a)(19). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

Reauthorize a winter antlerless moose season during part of February and March in Unit 21E as follows:

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
(19)		
...		
Unit 21(E)		
RESIDENT HUNTERS:		
...		
1 moose, by registration permit only, a person may not take a cow accompanied by a calf	Feb 15 – Mar 15	
...		

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Antlerless moose hunting seasons must be reauthorized annually. The goal is to provide additional harvest opportunity and meet harvest objectives.

This moose population is beginning to show signs of nutritional stress. The most current survey in 2019 indicated there are 9,777 moose in Unit 21E, which is within the range of the Intensive Management (IM) population objective of 9,000–11,000 moose. There is currently a harvestable surplus of 390 moose; approximately 200 moose are harvested each year and there are additional moose available to harvest. Bull-to-cow ratios are high, with 42 bulls per 100 cows in 2018. The Intensive Management (IM) harvest objective for Unit 21E is 550–1,100 moose.

Within the Unit 21E moose survey area (4,094 mi²), the overall moose density increased from 1.0 moose/mi² in 2000 to 2.1 moose/mi² in 2019. During most of these years of growth, twinning rates remained high; however, twinning rates began declining in 2015. The 2-year average twinning rate in the Holy Cross area is 19%, while north of Anvik and Shageluk (where moose density is lower) the twinning rate is 41%. The current intensive management plan calls for stabilizing the population through harvest when the 2-year average twinning rate is 15–20%. Browse utilization is high in the Holy Cross area where the population density is highest and where winter mortality in deep snow years is a concern.

Additional harvest opportunity is available. Winter hunts distribute hunter pressure and allow access to areas inaccessible in the fall.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F22-040)

PROPOSAL 186

5 AAC 92.015(a)(4). Brown bear tag fee exemptions.

Reauthorize resident grizzly/brown bear tag fee exemptions throughout Interior and Northeast Alaska as follows:

(a) A resident tag is not required for taking a brown bear in the following units:

...

(4) Units 12, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26(B), and 26(C)

...

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Brown bear tag fee exemptions must be reauthorized annually. Reauthorizing the exemption allows residents who have not purchased the \$25 brown bear tag to take bears opportunistically. This reauthorization would assist with our objective of managing Region III brown bear populations for hunter opportunity and would continue to allow hunters to take brown bears opportunistically.

Region III (Interior and Northeast Alaska) brown bear populations are healthy, and harvest is monitored through the brown bear sealing requirement. Reauthorizing all resident brown bear tag fees throughout Region III maintains simpler regulations, high resident hunter opportunity, and is not likely to cause declines in these brown bear populations. This reauthorization includes tag fee exemptions for subsistence registration permit hunts in Units 19A and 19B (downstream of and including the Aniak River drainage), 21D, and 24.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game estimates that brown bear harvest accounts for less than 6% of the bear population. Harvest is composed primarily of males and is sustainable. Where harvests are elevated (i.e., Units 20A, 20B, 20D, and portions of 26B), brown bear populations are managed by adjusting seasons and bag limits. The absence of resident tag fees that were in place prior to 2010 appears to have little effect on net harvest across the region in general.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F22-038)

PROPOSAL 187

5 AAC 92.015. Brown bear tag fee exemption.

Reauthorize the brown bear tag fee exemptions for the Central/Southwest Region as follows:

5AAC 92.015. Brown bear tag fee exemption

(a) A resident tag is not required for taking a brown bear in the following units:

- (1) Unit 11;
- (2) Units 13 and 16(A);
- (3) Unit 16(B) and 17;
- ...
- (11) Unit 9, within the following areas, unless a smaller area is defined by the department in an applicable permit:
 - (A) Unit 9(B), within five miles of the communities of Port Alsworth, Nondalton, Iliamna, Newhalen, Pile Bay, Pedro Bay, Pope Vanoy Landing, Kakhonak, Igiugig, and Levelock;
 - (B) Unit 9(C), within five miles of the communities of King Salmon, Naknek, and South Naknek;
 - (C) Unit 9(D), within five miles of the communities of Cold Bay, King Cove, Sand Point, and Nelson Lagoon;
 - (D) Unit 9(E), within five miles of the communities of Egegik, Pilot Point, Ugashik, Port Heiden, Port Moller, Chignik Lake, Chignik Lagoon, Chignik Bay, Perryville, and Ivanof Bay;

(12) Unit 10, within three miles of the community of False Pass, unless a smaller area is defined by the department in an applicable permit.

(b) In addition to the units as specified in (a) of this section, if a hunter obtains a subsistence registration permit before hunting, that hunter is not required to obtain a resident tag to take a brown bear in the following units:

- (1) Unit 9(B);
- (2) Unit 9(E), that portion including all drainages that drain into the Pacific Ocean between Cape Kumliun and the border of Unit 9(D) and Unit 9(E);
- (3) Unit 17;
- ...

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Brown bear tag fee exemptions must be reauthorized annually, or the fee will be automatically reinstated.

General Season Hunts: The board liberalized brown bear hunting regulations including the tag fee exemption to increase the harvest of brown bears in Units 11, 13, and 16 during the March 2003 Board of Game meeting and in Unit 17 during the March 2011 Board of Game meeting. The tag fee exemption in these units provides greater opportunity to harvest brown bears by allowing opportunistic harvest.

In March 2011 the board also exempted brown bear tag fees for bear hunts near communities in Units 9 and 10 to address public safety concerns in communities. Brown bears are abundant in Units 9 and 10 and are managed primarily as a trophy species. Brown bears are frequently observed in communities where they destroy property in search of food or garbage and occasionally kill pets. The liberalized bear seasons and bag limits adopted along with the elimination of the tag fee were intended to allow people to take bears opportunistically, to promote a greater acceptance of the unit's bear population, and to resolve some of the compliance issues associated with the take of bears in defense of life or property.

Subsistence Brown Bear Hunts: The board waived the brown bear tag fee requirement for subsistence brown bear hunts in Unit 17 and portions of Unit 9. Subsistence brown bear harvest rates are low and well within sustainable limits. Exempting the resident tag fee has not caused an increase in subsistence harvest in these units. Continuation of the exemption accommodates cultural and traditional uses of brown bears in these units and provides an alternative for hunters who take brown bears primarily for their meat.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F22-037)

PROPOSAL 188

5 AAC 92.015. Brown bear tag fee exemptions.

Reauthorize the current resident tag fee exemptions for brown bear in Units 18, 22, 23 and 26A as follows:

(a) A resident tag is not required for taking a brown bear in the following units:

- ...
- (4) Units... 26;
- ...
- (8) Unit 22;
- (9) Unit 23;
- ...
- (13) Unit 18;
- ...

(b) In addition to the units as specified in (a) of this section, if a hunter obtains a subsistence registration permit before hunting, that hunter is not required to obtain a resident tag to take a brown bear in the following units:

- ...
- (4) Unit 18;

- ...
- (7) Unit 22;
- (8) Unit 23;
- ...
- (10) Unit 26(A)

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Board of Game must reauthorize brown bear tag fee exemptions annually or the fee automatically becomes reinstated. We recommend continuing resident tag fee exemptions for the general season and subsistence season hunts in Region V (Units 18, 22, 23, and 26A).

General Season Hunts: Reauthorizations are needed for: Unit 18, where the tag fee has been exempted for 9 years; Unit 22, where the tag fee has been exempted for 19 years; Unit 23, where the tag fee has been exempted for 14 years; and Unit 26A, where the tag fee has been exempted for 9 years. Tag fee exemptions are desired to allow: 1) incremental increase in annual harvest; 2) opportunistic harvest by resident hunters; and 3) harvest by a wide range of users.

General season brown bear harvest rates are within sustained yield limits and previous exemptions of the resident tag fee have not caused dramatic or unexpected increases in overall harvest. In Units 18 and 26A, tag exemptions were authorized for RY2012 and harvest has remained within sustained yield and continues to be similar to the preceding ten-year period. In Unit 22, the 18-year tag-free period for residents has had an average annual harvest of 50 brown bears (range 41–63 bears). In Unit 23, general harvests have been increasing slowly since 1961 primarily in response to increases in human population rather than regulatory changes, although annual harvests vary due to weather and hunting conditions. Harvest data for Unit 23 show no trend in the sex ratio, age or size of bears harvested under all types of hunts.

Subsistence Season Hunts: Reauthorizations are needed for Units 18, 22, 23, and 26A where brown bear subsistence hunt requirements include: 1) registration permit, 2) tag fee exemption, 3) salvaging meat for human consumption, 4) no use of aircraft in Units 22, 23 and 26A, 5) no sealing requirement unless hide and skull are removed from subsistence hunt area, and 6) if sealing is required, the skin of the head and front claws must be removed and retained by ADF&G at the time of sealing. Continuing the tag fee exemption helps facilitate participation in the associated brown bear harvest programs maintained by ADF&G for subsistence hunts.

In all units, subsistence brown bear harvest rates are low and well within sustained yield limits and exempting the resident tag fee has not caused an increase in subsistence harvest. In Unit 18, we estimate 0–3 bears are taken annually in subsistence hunts. In Unit 22, subsistence harvest by permit is quite low, averaging fewer than one bear per year (less than 1% of the total brown bear harvest). In Unit 23, subsistence permit harvest has been fewer than five bears annually since 1992 (less than 10% of the total brown bear harvest). In Unit 26A, between zero and five bears are taken annually by subsistence hunters.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F22-036)
