

MARCH 2023 BOARD OF GAME MEETING**PROPOSAL 205****INTRODUCTION**

My name is Michael Hinkes. I'm a retired Wildlife Biologist Pilot/Federal Game Warden. Most of my career has been spent in Alaska, with focus on moose, caribou, bison and grizzly bear.

45 YEARS

I've been going to Farewell for the last 45 years. During my first 6 years, I was a biologist for BLM conducting a fire effect study of the Bear creek fire, often referred to the Farewell Fire. During that time, I spent summers studying moose habitat trends following the fire. In cooperation with ADFG, I spent time conducting winter aerial surveys for moose, bison and caribou.

1981 STAKING

In 1981, I staked 25 acres under the State's Remote Parcel Program. The parcel is located 4.5 miles downstream from Farewell. Over time, I developed the property with a cabin, outbuildings, and a runway. Our family spends 4-6 weeks there each year, May through September.

MORE THAN A HUNTING SPOT

Farewell is more than just a hunting spot, It's a very special place for our family. And protecting the resources is a number one priority for us.

45 YEARS OF CHANGE – 80S, 90S CURRENT

I've seen a lot of changes over the last 45 years. I killed my first moose in October 1980, when the season ran thru Oct 10. During the 80's, few hunters were encountered in the field. In the 90's and early 2000, the number of hunters increase substantially. However, nothing like we've

have seen the **last 4-5 years**, where the number of hunters has doubled, and the proportion of non-residents has increased.

PAST MANAGEMENT.

ADFG has done a great job managing the moose harvest over the years, adjusting for the increase in hunters, reducing the hunt from ending Oct 10, to Sept 30th, 25th, 20th, then finally to spike fork/ 50". Until recently, despite the increase in number of hunters, the moose population has supported a good harvest and hunter success.

POPULATION SUSTAINABILITY

I've always been amazed at the size of moose population around Farewell, the number of big bulls, and the sustainability of the population despite the increased number of moose taken each year.

MIGRATORY/RESIDENT

I believe a big reason is the fact that Farewell supports both a resident and migratory population. Late September, early October was always the prime time to hunt as the migratory component moved into the area as rut kicked in. As the season was shortened, I believe the late comers were protected from the onslaught of hunters and available for the next year.

CHANGE IN MIGRATORY PATTERN

However, I believe that has changed some, and more of the bulls are moving into the Farewell area earlier. So, more bulls are available during the season, and less are protected after the season closes.

INCREASE IN PREDATION

In addition, wolves and bears have become a big problem and must be addressed when considering management options. We have always seen wolves and bears during the summer and fall hunt, but nothing

like we have seen (or heard) in recent years. Their tracks are everywhere, and they are heard howling on a regular basis. I have counted 13 wolves in a single pack. During the recent spring bison hunt, 8 wolves were killed over one bison carcass.

ATV/UTVs USE.

With the significant increase in moose hunters in the Farewell area, so have we seen a significant increase in ATV/UTV use and habitat destruction. A minimum of **100 bikes** are used by hunters during the season. Where once there were just a few old fire trails, and the old Iditarod for hunters to follow, there are now trails everywhere.

ATV PAST EXAMPLE

When I first started hunting at Farewell, we would drive our 3-wheeler on an old fire trail to 5-mile hill, a great lookout. We'd park on the trail and climb on foot to the top. From there we'd spot a moose, then hustle a mile down the hill to chase him. Now there are 3 trails that go to the top, and you can find a half dozen bikes on top on given morning.

QUALITY OF HUNT

In addition to the habitat destruction, the quality of the hunt has decreased. You can't hunt anywhere without another possie of ATV's coming up behind you.

MANAGEMENT NEED.

Based on current population numbers and ratios, something needs to be done to reduce the number of hunters, it must include some type of serious predator control.

PROPOSAL 205

Proposal 205 is a good start. There is **precedent** for the BOG to give **residents a priority** when resources are limited. Proposal 205 provides

that while still giving non-residents an opportunity to hunt in the Farewell hunt area. The number of draw permits allowed for non-residents is up for discussion, but starting low is the best option.

2023 MOOSE HUNT

If the BOG did approve Proposal 205, it is our understanding that it could not be implemented for the 2023 hunt. ADFG feels something needs to be done this season to reduce the take, and I and numerous other hunters agree. If we wait until 2024 to reduce hunters, another 100 bulls or more could be removed from the population.

BOG and/or ADFG have some options that could be implemented for 2023.

SURVEY.

Over the last couple months, I conducted an informal survey Farewell hunters. Seventy hunters responded, 42 (61%) residents, 28 (39%) non-residents. I was interested in my own benefit but thought it might be helpful for the BOG and ADFG. Questions included:

1. Hunters were asked if they supported Proposal 205
2. Hunters were then asked what option they would prefer to reduce moose harvest for the 2023:
 - Keep current registration hunt.
 - Shorten season by 5 days (potential ADFG option)
 - Hunt with emergency closure after x number of moose taken.
 - Close 2023 season to NR hunters.
 - Close 2023 season to R and NR hunters

RESULTS

100% of respondents support Proposal 205

59 (84%) favored closing the 2023 season for R and NR.

11 (19%) favored closing the 2023 season to NR only.

Of the 42 residents, 74% favored closing 2023 to R and NR, then have Proposal 205 go into effect in 2024.

All 28 NR hunters favored closing 2023 season for R and NR

No one favored any of the other options.

OTHER SURVEY COMMENTS

NEED TO REDUCE HARVEST 2023: All agreed something needed to be done immediately to curb the harvest and reduce the number ATV/UTVs.

SHORTER SEASON OPTION: This option would result in a concentration of hunter and ATV/UTVs. This option could result in more NR hunters in 2023 knowing 2024 draw hunt would limit their opportunity.

EMERGENCY CLOSURE OPTION: Limiting harvest would also concentrate hunters in the early part of the hunt. It would require ADFG staffing and a check station at Farewell.

PREDATOR CONTROL: Support an aggressive predator control program, ie land and shoot for wolves, 2 grizzly bear limit, etc?

STOP ILLEGAL TRANSPORTING: Need to stop the illegal transportation of non-resident hunters. Some camps bring in hunters under guise of a shared hunting expenses. One camp brings in up to twenty plus hunters, provide them an ATV, a map and sends them out. Often, they

have no clue what they're doing, no game bags... In 2022, his first group broke some 4-wheelers, so he purchased 3 new machine and flew them out in the middle of the hunt.

LAW ENFORCEMENT: Need to increase penalties for sub-legal moose. The \$300 is not much of an incentive to not pray and spray. Bringing back restoration penalties is also needed.

SUMMARY

Farewell a very special place for me, my family and friends. So, protecting the resources around Farewell will always be a high priority. I've witnessed a lot of changes over the last 45 years at Farewell, and it's time to make another. You can see by the survey, there are a lot us resident and non-resident hunters that are willing to sacrifice to keep the Farewell moose population healthy. So, I ask the Board to approve Proposal 205, and for 2023, close the season for 1 year, or at a minimum, close it to non-residents until Proposal 205 is fully implemented in 2024. I would also highly recommend the implement an aggressive proditor control program.