

Western Arctic / Western Region Meeting

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ALASKA BOARD OF GAME
Western Arctic / Western Region Meeting
National Guard Armory, Kotzebue, Alaska
January 26-29, 2024

TENTATIVE AGENDA

Note: This Tentative Agenda is subject to change throughout the course of the meeting. It is provided to give a general idea of the board's anticipated schedule. The board will attempt to hold to this schedule; however, the board is not constrained by this Tentative Agenda.

Friday, January 26, 8:30 a.m.

OPENING BUSINESS

Call to Order / Purpose of Meeting
Introductions of Board Members and Staff
Board Member Ethics Disclosures

AGENCY AND OTHER REPORTS (A List of Oral Reports will be provided prior to the meeting.)

PUBLIC & ADVISORY COMMITTEE TESTIMONY upon conclusion staff reports

THE DEADLINE TO SIGN UP TO TESTIFY will be announced prior to the meeting.

Public testimony will continue until persons who have signed up before the deadline, and who are present when called by the Chair to testify, are heard.

Saturday, January 27, 8:30 a.m.

PUBLIC AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE ORAL TESTIMONY

BOARD DELIBERATIONS upon conclusion of public testimony.

Sunday, January 28, 9:00 a.m.

BOARD DELIBERATIONS

Tuesday, January 29, 8:30 a.m.

BOARD DELIBERATIONS conclude.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS, including petitions, findings and policies, letters, and other business

ADJOURN

Agenda Notes

- A. Meeting materials, including a list of staff reports, a roadmap, and schedule updates, will be available prior to the meeting at: www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=gameboard.meetinginfo or by contacting ADF&G Boards Support Section in Juneau at 465-4110.
- B. A live audio stream for the meeting is intended to be available at: www.boardofgame.adfg.alaska.gov
- C. The State of Alaska Department of Fish and Game complies with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). Individuals with disabilities who may need auxiliary aids, services, and/or special modifications to participate in this hearing and public meeting should contact 465-6098 no later than two weeks prior to start of the meeting to make any necessary arrangements.

Regionwide & Multiple Units

PROPOSAL 1

5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep.

Open an archery-only registration permit hunt in Units 23 and 26 for resident hunters when it is determined sheep hunting can be allowed in those areas as follows:

If or when it is determined that Unit 23 and 26A sheep populations can support a limited amount of hunting:

Registration hunt:

Unit 23 (east and west of the Etivluk River) to include the DeLong and Schwatka mountains within this unit or specific areas there within as determined appropriate by ADF&G.

RESIDENT HUNTERS: One ram, full curl or larger, by bow and arrow only.

Season: August 10 - September 20

Hunters must register for this hunt (in person at license vendors within Unit 23/26A) and report successful harvest within 48 hours of exiting the field.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? If and only if, it is determined the sheep population in Units 23 and 26A can again support hunting, the area should be open to hunting by bow and arrow only. Bow and arrow hunting is an important conservation management tool that provides hunting opportunity while minimizing harvest.

In August of 2014 an emergency order was placed on Unit 23 and 26A (West of the Etivluk River) to close all sheep hunting because of a marked decrease in the sheep population. Sheep population data for this area is not currently publicly available but if the biologists determine that this area can support a limited amount of hunting at any point in the future, it would make the most sense to open it as an archery only hunt. Creating an archery hunt would reintroduce hunting opportunity of all hunters.

Archery only hunting does not adversely affect opportunity in any way. It simply requires that hunters use a shorter range weapon. This will make the hunt a little more difficult but will maintain the experience of the hunt. Skilled and/or lucky hunters will still harvest rams but the overall impact on the population will be much lower than that of a rifle hunt.

Going forward, with sheep numbers across the state in general decline and agreement at recent state and national wild sheep conservation meetings that this problem is unlikely to improve in the future (climate change related weather events) we, as hunters, must accept that alternative management options such as temporary hunt closures or draw hunts may become increasingly necessary. Archery hunts provide an appealing alternative because they do not limit opportunity but do limit the harvest. Archery hunts have been used as management tools around the world for this reason and it's time that we consider this option more broadly in Alaska. If or when the sheep population in Units 23 and 26A has recovered enough to support some minimal amount of hunting it should be a registration archery only hunt.

This should be a registration hunt so that ADF&G can monitor the harvest and shut down the hunt if harvest reaches a biological threshold determined by ADF&G.

Of note, in the past there has been some resistance to transitioning existing rifle hunts into archery hunts because of the perception of some that this somehow decreases opportunity. It is, however, well established throughout the United States and in Alaska that all hunters are capable of taking advantage of archery hunts by the simple means of purchasing and learning to shoot a bow. Currently it's possible to buy an effective hunting bow for less than the cost of most rifles and to learn to shoot accurately in a matter of weeks.

PROPOSED BY: Paul Forward

(EG-F23-297)

Note: This proposal is also scheduled for the March 15 – 22, 2024 Interior and Eastern Arctic Region meeting in Fairbanks, Alaska as Proposal 139. Units 22, 23, and 26A will be considered at the Western Arctic / Western Region meeting. The board may defer final action on all Units to the Interior and Eastern Arctic Region meeting.

PROPOSAL 2

5 AAC 85.025. Hunting seasons and bag limits for caribou.

Reduce the bag limit for taking caribou in Units 21D Remainder, 22, 23, 24B Remainder, 24C, 24D and 26A to four caribou per year, only one of which may be a cow as follows:

RESIDENT HUNTERS: Four caribou [FIVE CARIBOU PER DAY] per year, however, no more than 1 cow may be taken.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Data from biologists at ADF&G illustrate there has been continued decline in the Western Arctic caribou herd (WACH). The July 2022 photo census estimated 164,000 caribou in the Western Arctic caribou herd which is down from 188,000 in 2021. Census numbers for past years: 2020 – no census; 2019 – 244,000; 2018 – no census; 2017 – 259,000; 2016 – 201,000. In the two years between the 2019 and 2021 census, the herd declined nearly 12% per year. Additionally, data shows that the cow survival rate is at 71% in 2021, well below the herd's average of 81% (1981-2020). ADF&G presented this information to the WACH Working Group in December 2022.

At its annual meeting the WACH Working Group assigned the management level “Preservative, Declining” to the herd based on the current census (within the range of 130,000-200,000) and adult cow survival rate less than 80%.

In doing so, the WACH Working Group sees the immediate need to address the current herd decline by limiting the harvest of both bulls and cows to allow the herd population to begin to recover.

In the game management units identified above, the current bag limit is set at five caribou per person per day during the open periods for bulls and cows. The WACH Working Group proposes to change regulations to four caribou per person per year, with no more than one cow allowed.

PROPOSED BY: Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group, Vern Cleveland, Chair (EG-F23-208)

Note: This proposal is also scheduled for the March 15 – 22, 2024 Interior and Eastern Arctic Region meeting in Fairbanks, Alaska as Proposal 140. Units 22, 23, and 26A will be considered at the Western Arctic / Western Region meeting. The board may defer final action on all Units to the Interior and Eastern Arctic Region meeting.

PROPOSAL 3

5 AAC 85.025. Hunting seasons and bag limits for caribou.

Close nonresident caribou hunting in Units 21D Remainder, 22, 23, 24B Remainder, 24C, 24D, and 26A as follows:

The Western Arctic Caribou Herd working group (WACH WG) proposes to close caribou hunting in Units 21D Remainder, 22, 23, 24B Remainder, 24C, 24D, and 26A to non-Alaska residents.

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS: **No open season** [1 BULL].

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Data from biologists at ADF&G illustrate that there has been continued decline in the Western Arctic caribou herd (WACH). The July 2022 photo census estimated 164,000 caribou in the Western Arctic caribou herd which is down from 188,000 in 2021. Census numbers for past years: 2020 – no census; 2019 – 244,000; 2018 – no census; 2017 – 259,000; 2016 – 201,000. In the two years between the 2019 and 2021 census, the herd declined nearly 12% per year. Additionally, data shows that the cow survival rate is at 71% in 2021, well below the herd’s average of 81% (1981-2020). ADF&G presented this information to the WACH Working Group in December 2022.

At its annual meeting the WACH WG assigned the management level “Preservative, Declining” to the herd based on the current census (within the range of 130,000-200,000) and adult cow survival rate less than 80%. In doing so, the WACH WG sees the immediate need to address the current herd decline by limiting caribou harvest to allow the herd population to begin to recover.

In a separate proposal, the WACH WG proposes a reduction in harvest for resident hunters. The working group feels that if harvest reductions are placed on Alaskans to allow the herd to recover, there should also be harvest reductions for non-resident hunters.

Currently, in the game management units identified above, nonresident hunters are allowed to harvest one (1) bull per year. The WACH WG proposes to close caribou hunting in Units 21D Remainder, 22, 23, 24B Remainder, 24C, 24D, and 26A to nonresidents.

PROPOSED BY: Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group, Vern Cleveland, Chair (EG-F23-209)

PROPOSAL 4

5 AAC 85.025. Hunting seasons and bag limits for caribou.

Align caribou seasons in Unit 26A and Unit 23, and reduce the bag limit as follows:

Align caribou harvest and seasons with Unit 26A remainder to reduce cow harvest in southern Unit 26A and Unit 23 north of and including Singoalik River Drainage as follows:

Five caribou per day **3 of which may be cows, cows with calves may not be taken; July 16-Oct. 15.**

[FIVE] **Three cows per day, cows with calves may not be taken. Oct. 16-Dec. 31.**

Five caribou per day **3 or which may be cows, no calves may be taken Jan. 1- March 15.**

[FIVE] **Three caribou per day cows only Jan. 1-Mar 15.**

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Western Arctic caribou herd has been in decline since its population peaked in 2003. In 2022 its population was estimated to be 164,000 which is below the ADF&G's population objective of over 200,000 animals. To address this decline we suggest reducing the harvest of cows in Unit 26A despite the understanding that the majority of harvest occurs on the Teshekpuk herd in northern and eastern Unit 26A. The Teshekpuk herd is stable to increasing based on the last photo census which enumerated 61,500 caribou in 2022.

PROPOSED BY: North Slope Fish and Game Advisory Committee (EG-F23-191)

PROPOSAL 5

5 AAC 85.025. Hunting seasons and bag limits for caribou.

Reduce the bag limit for caribou for RC907 resident hunters in Units 23 and 26A, and change the nonresident hunt to a registration permit with additional restrictions as follows:

Unit 23, that portion north of and including the Singoalik River drainage

RESIDENT HUNTERS: five caribou per **season, no more than one of which may be a cow,** [day, as follows: up to 5 bulls per July 1 - Oct. 14 day; however, calves Feb. 1 - June 30 may not be taken; up to five cows per day; Jul. 15 - Apr. 30 however, calves may not be taken]

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS: one bull; however, calves Aug. 1 – Sept. 30 may not be taken;

Remainder of Unit 23

RESIDENT HUNTERS: 5 caribou per **season, no more than one of which may be a cow,** [day, as follows: up to five bulls per day; July 1 - Oct. 14 however, calves may not Feb. 1 - June 30 be taken; up to five cows per day; Sept. 1 - Mar. 31 however, calves may not be taken]

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS: one bull; however, Aug. 1 - Sept. 30 calves may not be taken; . . .

Unit 26A, that portion of the Colville River drainage upstream from the Anaktuvuk River, and drainages of the Chukchi Sea south and west of, and including the Utukok River drainage

RESIDENT HUNTERS: five caribou per season, no more than one of which may be a cow, [day, as follows: up to 5 bulls per July 1 - Oct. 14 day; however, Feb. 1 - June 30 calves may not be taken; up to five cows per day; Jul. 15 - Apr. 30 however, calves may not be taken];

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS: one bull; however, July 15 - Sept. 30 calves may not be taken;

Remainder of Unit 26A

RESIDENT HUNTERS: five caribou [bulls] per season, no more than one of which may be a cow, [day: July 1 - July 15 however, calves may not be taken; five caribou per day; July 16 - Oct. 15 however, no more than three cows per day; cows accompanied by calves and calves may not be taken; three cows per day; Oct. 16 - Dec. 31 however, calves may not be taken; five caribou per day; Jan. 1 - Mar. 15 however, no more than three cows per day; calves may not be taken; five bulls per day; Mar. 16 - June 30 however, calves may not be taken;]

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS: one bull; however, July 15 - Sept. 30 calves may not be taken;

RESIDENT HUNTERS: season limits above would modify all hunts within RC907. NONRESIDENT HUNTERS in both Units would no longer harvest pursuant to a harvest ticket but instead a new registration hunt would be established with a quota to be determined by ADG&F as herd management objectives dictate but no less than 400 bulls.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? This proposal is to change the type of hunts (Harvest Ticket (HT) and Registration) and harvest limits for caribou in Units 23 and 26A that affect the Western Arctic caribou herd (WACH). Much concern has been raised in recent years by various stakeholders over the decline in numbers of the WACH. While the department has clearly determined that the herd remains large enough for subsistence and non-local hunting, efforts to better monitor the annual harvest (through use of registration hunts) and control over season harvests (quotas) would allow the department to closely monitor and limit the effects of subsistence and non-local hunting if needed, while continuing to allow for hunting access to all users. This proposal reduces the extremely liberal harvest limits for residents within the WACH's range and makes nonresidents subject to a registration hunt. This proposal would hopefully eliminate the need for unnecessary closure of federal (or other) lands to hunting by any individuals and allow hunting access to the entirety of both units to all residents and nonresidents. The impact that the small percent of harvests by non-locals could have on the caribou herd pales in comparison to the impact of closing federal hunting opportunities in Units 23 and 26A for non-subsistence hunters. A far more reasonable protective measure (if any is needed) to help slow the decline of the WACH is to drastically reduce the harvest of cows and calves and narrow the limit on the annual harvest of bulls between subsistence and non-subsistence users. As non-subsistence users account for only a percent or two of the annual harvest, closing substantial portions of the units to this non-impactful group does nothing to promote the objective of protecting the WACH. This proposal is made as an effort to allow the department to better monitor and control the harvest of caribou by all users as needed to meet and maintain management objectives.

PROPOSED BY: Gary Colbath

(EJ-F23-667)

Bethel Area Proposals - Unit 18

PROPOSAL 6

5 AAC 85.025. Hunting seasons and bag limits for caribou.

Close the Mulchatna caribou herd to hunting for five to ten years in Unit 18 as follows:

Request that the Mulchatna caribou herd is placed under a moratorium for five to ten years, while reviewing every five years.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Request that the Mulchatna caribou herd is placed under a moratorium for five to ten years, while reviewing every five years. Current population of the Mulchatna caribou herd is significantly alarming across the heard migration units. The current population doesn't give allowance for any harvestable take, as the population has plummeted below 30,000 for over the past three to five years.

PROPOSED BY: Alissa Nadine Rogers

(EG-F23-319)

PROPOSAL 7

5 AAC 85.045. Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

Lengthen the resident only registration moose hunt RM617 in Unit 18 by two weeks to end October 15 as follows:

5 AAC 85.045. Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

(a)(16)

...

Unit 18, that portion south of the Eek River
Drainage and north of and including the
Carter Bay drainage

Sept. 1 – **Oct. 15** [SEPT. 30]

1 antlered bull by registration permit only

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Moose are an important subsistence resource for members of the Native Village of Kwinhagak. Because of increases in food costs, the village's remote location, and changing environmental factors, food security is a significant and growing concern. Importantly, since 2020, subsistence hunters have not hunted caribou from the Mulchatna caribou herd due to low population numbers. The Mulchatna caribou herd has historically been one of the village's primary food sources. Thus, there is an increased reliance on moose hunting to meet subsistence needs, and coincidentally the moose population in the area near Quinhagak (the Arolik River and Kanektok River drainages) is increasing.

The current season dates of September 1 to September 30 do not provide an adequate opportunity for Quinhagak's subsistence needs. Poor weather during the month of September for the past two years has

resulted in the failure to reach moose quotas before the hunting season closed. Other areas adjacent to Quinhagak, such as the Goodnews and Eek Rivers, have moose hunts that are open for longer seasons, September 1 to October 15. The Native Village of Kwinhagak proposes that its season be extended by 15 days to match those seasons and provide a more meaningful opportunity for Quinhagak residents to meet subsistence needs.

PROPOSED BY: Native Village of Kwinhagak (HQ-F23-008)

PROPOSAL 8

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

Extend season dates for moose hunting in hunt RM617 in Unit 18 as follows:

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

(16)

...

Unit 18, that portion of
 The Eek River drainage and
 north of the and including the
 Carter Bay drainage

1 antlered bull by registration permit only	Sept. 1-[Sept. 30] <u>Oct. 15</u>	No open Season.
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What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Kanektok and Arolik Rivers within this hunt area have a new and growing moose population. Over the last few years there have been numerous requests for season extensions. By extending the season to October 15th, the season dates would more closely align with those in the neighboring hunt area, reduce confusion for hunters, and provide additional hunting opportunity.

In chronological order, since the hunt began in 2019, the total moose harvest in the RM617 hunt area from RY19-RY22 was 16, 12, 7 and 9 moose. While harvest for RY22 is still preliminary due to late reporting, reported harvest is not expected to change significantly.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F23-054)

PROPOSAL 9

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

Liberalize the bag limit for moose in Unit 18 remainder as follows:

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

Remainder of Unit 18

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

<u>3</u> [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.
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<u>3</u> [2] antlerless moose; or	Oct. 1—Nov. 30.
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<u>3</u> [2] moose	Dec. 1—Apr. 30
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NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 antlered bull: or	Sept. 1—Sept. 30
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[1 antlerless moose]	[Dec. 1— Mar. 15]
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...

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Within the areas near the Yukon River, the moose population is estimated at a minimum of 24,000 animals. Browse removal rates were estimated to be 31% within the hunt area in 2021. Calf to cow ratios are generally declining and spring short yearling weights downriver of Mountain Village averaged below 300lbs in 2021 and 2022. These indices suggest the moose population along the Lower Yukon River is experiencing nutritional stress. Additional harvest can be used to reduce the overall moose abundance which will improve nutritional indices.

The moose harvest for the period RY17-RY22 was 747, 709, 803, 538, and 640 moose, respectively. The RY22 season is still open and data will be available at the board meeting.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F23-057)

PROPOSAL 10

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

Liberalize the moose bag limit in Unit 18 Kuskokwim hunt area as follows:

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
(16) ...		
Unit 18 Kuskokwim Area, that portion easterly of a line from the mouth of the Ishkowik River to the closest point of Dall Lake then to east bank of the Johnson River at its entrance into Nunavakanukakslak Lake (60 59.41' N. latitude, 162 22.14' W. longitude), continuing up- river along a line one-half mile south and east of, and parallel- ing a line along the southerly bank of the Johnson River to the confluence of the east bank of Crooked Creek, then con- tinuing upriver along the east bank of Crooked Creek to the outlet at Arhymot lake, then following the south bank of Arhymont Lake easterly to the Unit 18 border and north of and including the Eek River drainage		
RESIDENT HUNTERS:		
1 bull, excluding male calves, by registration permit only;	Sept. 1-Oct. 15	No open season.

or

1 antlerless moose by
drawing permit only, up to
xx permits may be issued

Sept. 1-Oct. 15

No open season.

or

1 antlered bull by
drawing permit only, up to
XX permits may be issued

Dec.1-Jan.31

No open season.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Kuskokwim River moose hunt area, commonly known as the RM615 hunt area has experienced rapid population growth and range expansion of over the last 20 years. The 2020 estimate for Zone 1 of this hunt area is 3,220 moose having increased from less than 100 estimated moose in 2,000. The browse removal rate estimated in 2019 for this hunt area was 23%. Bull to cow ratios have ranged from 25B:100C to 29B:100C (2020 – 2022). The department would like to use an antlerless hunt to start leveling off the population at or near its current levels. It is anticipated this hunt would start out slow with 100 or less antlerless drawing permits being issued. The number of permits given out would be closely monitored and adjusted as needed to meet population objectives.

In chronological order, total moose harvest in Zone 1 of the RM615 hunt area from RY18-RY22 was 141, 160, 239, 151 and 200 moose. While harvest for RY22 is still preliminary due to late reporting, a significant change to reported harvest is not expected.

Using discretionary authority, the department anticipates only announcing a winner hunt for Zone 2 of the RM615 hunt area. Historically the bull cow ratio in Zone 2 has been high. Zone 2 of this hunt area can support additional bull harvest in addition to the fall hunt. There is a federal hunt in Zone 2 that provides some additional opportunity, and this proposal would closely align state and federal seasons.

In chronological order, total moose harvest in Zone 2 of the RM615 hunt area from RY18-RY22 was 72, 70, 90, 76 and 66 moose. During this time the harvestable surplus has been about 110 moose per year.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

(HQ-F23-055)

PROPOSAL 11

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
(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 (BOG) meeting in Kotzebue. The current antlerless hunt in the Goodnews hunt area and nonresident antlerless hunt was adopted at the January 2017 BOG meeting in Bethel. Both of these antlerless hunts were amended at the BOG meeting in 2020 in Nome. The board has previously reauthorized the antlerless moose season for resident hunts in Unit 18 Remainder for regulatory year RY2016 through RY2023. This proposal requests reauthorization for RY2024.

Implementation of antlerless hunts began in 2007 and has continued each year due to increased moose abundance, productivity, and population growth along the Yukon River drainage in Unit 18. Based on the steady growth in moose populations and productivity, 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 are high for the winter of 2021-2022 and 2022-2023. 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 killed in RY2017 and none in RY2018). The population now is over 400 moose and based on the steady growth in moose populations and productivity, ADF&G proposes continued antlerless moose hunts in the Goodnews River drainage.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

(HQ-F23-056)

PROPOSAL 12

5 AAC 92.085. Unlawful methods of taking big game.

Establish a minimum caliber requirement for hunting moose in Unit 18 as follows:

Recommend that the minimum caliber to hunt moose in Unit 18 to be .243 caliber or bigger, due to moose being wounded over the years with smaller calibers. With rifles of .243 caliber or bigger, the cartridge will have better penetration on moose to take out the vital organs when hit and have a better chance of recovering the moose.

Would recommend in the future of making this a statewide regulation.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Mandate minimum caliber for moose in all of Regions III and V.

PROPOSED BY: Mike Glore

(EG-F23-304)

PROPOSAL 13

5 AAC 85.065. Hunting seasons and bag limits for small game.

Increase the bag and possession limits for ptarmigan in Unit 18 as follows:

Unit 18: fifty ptarmigan per day, 100 in possession.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Increase the bag limit of ptarmigan from 15 to 50 and from 30 to 100 in possession.

PROPOSED BY: Brenda Lindsey

(HQ-F23-001)

PROPOSAL 14

5 AAC 85.050. Hunting seasons and bag limits for musk oxen.

Open a hunt for muskox in a portion of Unit 18, with permits available to residents only, made available in communities closest to the herd as follows:

Current Regulation (Unit 18-remainder): ~~[NO OPEN SEASON]~~

Proposed Regulation: Unit 18-remainder - Limited, resident only, draw registration or permit hunt based on continued sustainability of various herds in Unit 18-Remainder.

Resident only draw registration or permit hunts would be made available in close proximity villages to provide maximum priority to local hunters. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game, in consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge staff and management, local advisory committees, the Yukon - Kuskokwim Regional Advisory Council, and close proximity villages would identify herds, provide for a harvestable surplus of the herd(s), and initiate a regulated hunt and season.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Musk oxen have migrated into the mainland from the Nelson Island and Nunivak Island herd for over forty years to various parts of Unit 18 and are becoming a common sight for berry pickers, campers, hunters, etc. Much of their current habitat is on federal lands of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge. There is no current "federal priority" for subsistence hunting. The last federal/state cooperative count was conducted in 2019 resulting in an observed estimate of 174 animals in various herds. *(ADF&G 2019 Memo, available upon request from Boards Support Section.)*

I propose that the Alaska Department of Fish & Game, in cooperation with the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, provide for a limited registration/permit hunt for the Unit 18 mainland musk ox based on the continued sustainability and further population growth of the developing herd.

PROPOSED BY: Timothy Andrew (HQ-F23-026)

PROPOSAL 15

5 AAC 85.050. Hunting seasons and bag limits for musk oxen.

Allow the subsistence take of muskox in a portion of Unit 18 as follows:

With healthy populations of muskox and upon availability. Adults may be used for subsistence harvest whenever they roam in the region. The same regulations that apply for moose should apply for muskoxen.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Some muskox now do roam elsewhere not only in their original site in lower unit 18 region and allow their meat to be used in potlucks as they are plentiful than moose in this area. Some do wander far out to the coast, get stranded on the sea ice, drift out, later drowning. They are one of the few land animals that are available for harvest. We depend on a subsistence lifestyle and the price of store bought meat is becoming increasingly expensive making it difficult to provide sustenance for our families.

PROPOSED BY: David Carl (HQ-F23-070)

PROPOSAL 16

5 AAC 84.270. Furbearer trapping.

Lengthen the wolf trapping season in Unit 18 by one month to end on April 30 as follows:

The Bethel Advisory Committee is proposing to change the Alaska trapping regulations for wolves in Unit 18 as follows:

WOLF* • Wolves must be sealed within 30 days after the close of the season. • You may not shoot or assist in shooting a wolf until after 3:00 a.m. following the day in which you have flown in an airplane. However, you may shoot a wolf caught in a trap or snare on the same day you have flown. • Unit 22: an ATV may be used to position trappers to take wolves during trapping seasons, the animals must be shot from a stationary ATV.

AREA OPEN SEASON LIMIT:

Unit 18Nov. 10 - [MAR 31].....No limit
Units 22, 23, and 26A.....Nov. 1 – Apr. 30.....No limit

THE NEW LANGUAGE:

Unit 18Nov. 10 -Apr. 30.....No limit

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? In addition to help with the rebuilding population efforts of the Mulchatna caribou herd, the Bethel Advisory Committee would like to extend the wolf trapping season from March 31 to April 30. This will give extra opportunity for wolves to be harvested.

PROPOSED BY: Bethel Fish and Game Advisory Committee (EG-F23-257)

PROPOSAL 17

5 AAC 85.020. Hunting seasons and bag limits for brown bear.

Increase the brown bear bag limit in Unit 18 as follows:

Increase brown / grizzly bear limit in Unit 18 from one to two bear.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Increase brown bear bag limit from one to two brown bears.

Due to the limited amount of hunters that harvest brown/grizzly bears in Unit 18, increase it to two bears to help the population of the Mulchatna Caribou herd to increase over the years so the Mulchatna Caribou calves can have a increased survival in the first three to six weeks of being born.

ADF&G can bring the bag limit back down to one bear in the coming years if the population of brown/grizzly bears gets too low.

PROPOSED BY: Mike Glore (EG-F23-321)

Nome Area – Unit 22

PROPOSAL 18

5 AAC 85.025. Hunting seasons and bag limits for caribou.

Open the caribou season in a portion of Unit 22A as follows:

Open up the caribou season in Unit 22A in all Golsovia River drainages and north of the Klikitarik River for resident and nonresident hunters.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? I would like to see the caribou season in Unit 22A south of and including the Golsovia River opened back up. Now I realize the Western Arctic caribou herd has been in decline. But the reason for closing this area to hunting caribou was unwarranted. The Stebbins and Saint Michael reindeer herders claimed there were no caribou down here and that local villages were coming up and killing their reindeer and calling them caribou. The truth is, there has always been caribou scattered up in the hills. If you look online, you can find documented cases of caribou that were found in the Andreafski hills back in the late 1800's. They were described as a smaller herd that didn't migrate like other herds in the state. They also tell stories from long ago of a herder who lost his herd between Saint Michael and Saint Mary that scattered and stayed up in the hills. I believe there is truth in both of these stories. I also know that when the caribou used to migrate down this way in the winter several would stay behind and mix in with other caribou and wild reindeer. So there has always been a herd if not smaller of caribou/wild reindeer in this area.

Now that first year the season was shut down, man oldest son run into some caribou up in Chief Mountains at the headwaters of the Golsovia. And when word got out, guess who were the first ones to go after them. The same reindeer herders that were telling everyone to quit hunting caribou because they are reindeer. Shutting this season down has stopped nothing. Yukon people are still coming up and hunting these caribou/wild reindeer and so are people from up north.

The only thing shutting this season down has done, was make it for someone like myself whom holds a guide license, unable to legally harvest caribou in this area. I don't believe anyone had done their homework when they closed down this season. I've been trapping, subsistence hunting and guiding in this area for 28 years and was not even aware they were thinking of shutting it down until afterwards. I've heard some of the herder's report of the herd size as much as 5,000 to 6,000 animals. When they fly around and do their count, they are going as far back as the head waters of the Andreafski, the upper Golsovia and beyond. There are caribou/wild reindeer scattered from the hills above Kotlik, through Step Mountain, Chief Mountains, the Nulato hills over to Needle Mountain and all the way north to upper South River of the Unalakleet River. Just north of the Golsovia River in Unit 22A, the season is open. And they have a fall season just over the ridge in Unit 21E. I think it only fair to open up the Unit 22A Remainder to caribou hunting, if nothing else at least in the Golsovia River drainages or north of the Klikitarik River. All that land is past the corporation property and gives a buffer zone for the local reindeer herd to free range in without being bothered.

Resident hunters and the few nonresident hunters should not be penalized because of the fact that the reindeer are just running wild. As stated, I realize the caribou herd has been in decline and this is not the time to expand the regulation. But this in my opinion is a regulation that should of never been instated. I would like to see it reopened, even if the limit is set as one caribou per hunter per year.

PROPOSED BY: Johnny Richardson

(EG-F23-167)

PROPOSAL 19

5 AAC 92.052. Discretionary permit hunt conditions and procedures.

5 AAC 92.151. Destruction of trophy value of game required in specific areas.

Change the trophy destruction requirements for muskox taken in Unit 22 subsistence hunts as follows:

Destruction of the horn at the kill site should remain and a section of horn should still be required to be submitted to ADF&G.

The new regulation would state: “The hunter must submit at least 5” of horn surrounding the eye socket to ADF&G.” (This is written to replace the language on page 32 of the regulation book.)

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Tier II muskox hunt trophy destruction. Horn destruction and submission to ADF&G for a subsistence hunt is appropriate. Currently the section of muskox horn that must be submitted to ADF&G to meet the trophy destruction is from within two inches of the eye to the tip. This is the section of horn that has the most use for crafts and other projects. One important aspect of subsistence hunting is to use as much of the animal as possible. Allowing the hunter to keep the horn ends while submitting a mid-section of horn would allow hunter to better utilize the horn.

PROPOSED BY: Southern Norton Sound Fish and Game Advisory Committee (HQ-F23-022)

PROPOSAL 20

5 AAC 85.050. Hunting seasons and bag limits for muskoxen.

Change the bag limit for Tier II muskox hunts in Unit 22 to one muskox every two years as follows:

Establish a multi-year bag limit for all Unit 22 Tier II musk ox hunts as follows:

Unit 22A. One bull by permit every two years. TX090

Unit 22B east of the Darby Mtns., including drainages of the Kwiniuk, Tubutulik, Koyuk, and Inglutalik rivers. One bull by permit every two years. TX105

Unit 22B remainder. One bull by permit every two years. TX105

Unit 22C that portion of the Snake River drainage... mouths of the Nome River and the Snake River. One bull by permit every two years. TX095

Unit 22C that portion of drainages flowing into Norton Sound... to the Safety Bridge. One bull by permit every two years. TX096

Unit 22D that portion west of the Tisuk... confluence with Tuksuk Channel. One bull by permit every two years. TX103

Unit 22D Kuzitrin River drainage (includes Kougarok and Pilgrim rivers). One bull by permit every two years. TX102

Unit 22D remainder. One bull by permit every two years. TX102

Unit 22E. One bull by permit every two years. TX104

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Under the points-based Tier II system, recipients of muskox hunting permits are limited to a relatively small pool of residents who are able to claim the maximum number of points on their application every year. Although the spirit of this system is in good faith and was established for good reason it eliminates longtime residents of communities who score slightly fewer points. This has led to a heavily skewed and very uneven distribution of the muskox resource in Unit 22 and added additional frustration for residents that perceive negative impacts from muskox without being able to benefit from the animal in any tangible way. Members of the Northern Norton Sound Advisory Committee have voiced frustration with the allocation of permits as well as heard testimony from many frustrated members of the public.

Because of the current population of muskox in Unit 22 and the amount necessary for subsistence, it is not practical to address the frustrations of the community by issuing more tags. This would run contrary to the current management plan and the sustained yield principle. My proposed solution is to establish a multi-year bag limit to ensure that permittees, who are successful in harvesting a muskox, cannot be selected for a permit two years in a row, allowing for increased participation in a subsistence hunt, albeit on a biennial basis.

Under the Tier II system it is anticipated that there is not a reasonable opportunity for all eligible residents to participate in subsistence hunting, so applications are scored. This proposal would not change that, nor would it change a hunter's opportunity to participate in a subsistence hunt two years in a row if they were not successful in the first year. Only if a muskox was harvested in one hunt would the bag limit be met and the hunter would be ineligible for the permit the following year, opening up the opportunity for another eligible resident to participate in the subsistence hunt.

PROPOSED BY: Jacob Mannix

(EG-F23-207)

PROPOSAL 21

5 AAC 85.050. Hunting seasons and bag limits for muskoxen.

Establish season dates for the harvest of cow muskox in the TX095 and TX096 Tier II hunts in Unit 22C, beginning August 1st and ending October 31st as follows.

"R 22C that portion...and the Snake river" One Bull ... TX095 Aug 1- Mar 15

One Cow ... TX095 May be Announced Aug 1- Oct 31

"R 22C that portion... to the Safety bridge" One Bull ... TX096 Aug 1- Mar 15

One Cow ... TX096 May Be Announced Aug 1- Oct 31

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Traditional harvest of muskox takes place during the winter and spring months from approximately December through the end of season on March 15th. Selection of this timeframe for optimal harvest can be attributed to several reasons, primarily the quality of meat post-rut, quality of the hide mid-winter, and ease of access and transportation of meat by snowmobile. Harvest outside of this timeframe has become very uncommon since residents of the Seward Peninsula have learned over the years that the prolonged rutting season of muskox has a significant effect on meat quality and the valuable qiviut in the hide is prime later in the winter. However, growing concern over human- muskox encounters over the years, followed by the recent human fatality caused by a muskox has spurred discussion of increased hunting to attempt to disperse or decrease the number of muskox present in certain areas.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has recently changed the bag limit for the TX095 and TX096 hunts to include the harvest of cow muskox. This was largely, if not solely, due to the recent muskox caused human fatality, a response to the following public outcry, and an effort to dissuade or disperse muskox herds from the near Nome areas. However, this may have little to no effect if the increased harvest is not targeted to a specific date range when muskox would normally not see any hunting pressure.

The current season dates allow for the harvest of muskox beginning August 1st, and ending March 15th, but as stated previously, the vast majority of the harvest occurs in the mid to late winter months. There is little reason for this harvest pattern to change and over the last number of years harvest during the mid and late winter months has not proven successful in deterring muskox presence from the near Nome areas.

If season dates were to be established for the harvest of cow muskox for the early part of the season it may be enough of a deterrent during the rut to move animals away from areas where human-muskox encounters are more likely to be problematic. Establishing season dates would ensure that consistent hunting pressure is applied in the relatively small areas of the inner and outer Nome areas and may educate muskox faster. Additionally, cow muskox are not known to undergo the strong physiological changes that male muskox go through during the rut and the meat will still be of good quality, although the qiviut will be poor or non-existent.

Finally, establishing season dates for the cow muskox hunt does not compel the department to hold a cow muskox season. Under the current regulatory structure there may, or may not be, cows available for harvest. This proposal, if adopted would only set the window of time during which a cow muskox may be harvested if there is any allowable harvest.

PROPOSED BY: Jacob Mannix

(EG-F23-235)

PROPOSAL 22

5 AAC 92.080. Unlawful methods of taking big game; exceptions.

Establish a minimum caliber for moose hunting in Unit 22A and a portion of Unit 22B as follows:

A set minimum .243 caliber size rifle for moose hunting in Units 22A and a portion of 22B in the Koyuk and Inglutalik River drainages.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Minimum rifle caliber for moose hunting in Unit 22A and a portion of Unit 22B in the Koyuk and Inglutalik Rivers drainages. In the last several years, reports of moose being wounded and not recovered have increased. In many instances, young adults (in their teens and twenties) shooting small caliber rifles have been responsible for these reports. In 2022 alone, two moose were harvested in the Unalakleet River drainage that had evidence of rifle wounds. Small caliber bullets were recovered from both. Setting a minimum caliber for moose hunting is one part of a larger effort to better educate hunters in the area. The Southern Norton Sound Advisory Committee has been working with ADF&G to increase hunter education classes within communities of the Southern Norton Sound Area. Another possible regulation would be to require one person in a hunting party to possess a larger caliber rifle if there was a young hunter carrying a smaller caliber rifle.

PROPOSED BY: Southern Norton Sound Fish and Game Advisory Committee (HQ-F23-021)

PROPOSAL 23

5 AAC 99.025. Customary and traditional uses of game populations.

Revisit the Amount Reasonably Necessary for subsistence uses for moose in Unit 22 as follows:

ADF&G is making sound management decisions based off of current data, not data that is over 20 years old. The Amount Necessary for Subsistence for moose hunting needs to be revisited and revised to reflect the current situation for local residents in Unit 22.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The information on the Amount Necessary for Subsistence (ANS) for moose in Unit 22 is over 20 years old (24 years) and should be updated with current data on subsistence users' needs. Communities on the Seward Peninsula have grown substantially in the last 20 years. The Nome population has almost doubled. According to the ADF&G data for 2022, 539 permits were given to Unit 22 local residents. The 2022 harvest in Unit 22B west was at 32, Unit 22C harvest was at 33, Unit 22D Kuzitrin/Pilgrim/Teller was at 38, and Unit 22D Remainder is at 15, with the total harvest of moose in these Units at 118.

By moose harvest tickets issued alone many residents are not getting a moose. The cost of meat in stores alone in rural Alaska is extremely high. Many residents within Unit 22 highly depend on moose meat to offset this cost as well as prefer moose over store bought meat. For several years Unit 22 residents have gone over the quota amounts as set forth by ADF&G staff; this indicates the need for moose by residents in Unit 22 is very high. A.S. 16.05.258(f) definition "An opportunity, as determined by the appropriate board, that allows a subsistence user to participate in a subsistence hunt or fishery that provides a normally diligent participant with a reasonable expectation of success of taking of fish or game." By definition, local subsistence moose hunters are not being allotted a reasonable amount of time to harvest moose when

quite often the moose hunt is closed the very next day after opening ex: fall of 2022 Unit 22C closed on day two of the hunt. In the Fall of 2022, the beginning of the moose hunt fell on a Thursday and closed on a Friday in Unit 22C. Many local residents simply cannot afford to take time off during the week to participate in a moose hunt, many local residents have to wait for Friday evening right after work or even the beginning of the weekend to start a moose hunt. These hunters are put at an extreme disadvantage, again by definition are not even being given a reasonable amount of time to participate in a hunt that is already closed.

PROPOSED BY: Kawerak, Inc, Melanie Bahnke President (EG-F23-306)

PROPOSAL 24

5 AAC 85.045. Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

Modify the winter season for moose in Unit 22A as follows:

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

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
(20)		
Unit 22(A), that portion in the Unalakleet River drainage and all drainages flowing into Norton Sound north of the Golsovia River drainage and south of and including the Egavik Creek drainage		
1 antlered bull by registration permit only; or 1 antlered bull by registration permit only[; DURING THE PERIOD DEC 1- JAN 31, A SEASON MAY BE ANNOUNCED BY EMERGENCY ORDER]	Sept. 1 – Sept. 30 Dec. 1 –Jan. 31 [(SEASON TO BE ANNOUNCED)]	No Open Season

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Removing the requirement to announce the winter moose season in Unit 22A Central would provide Department of Fish and Game the flexibility to administer registration permit hunt RM844 during the full range of season dates adopted by the Alaska Board of Game (board) without the need to announce the season by emergency order.

The department began administering registration permit RM844 during regulatory year (RY) 2008 following a closure to moose hunting in the area RY2005-RY2007. The RM844 winter season exists to

provide additional opportunity to harvest a moose when the estimated harvestable surplus was not taken during the fall season which is managed under RM841. The department will issue an emergency order to announce the winter season when the harvestable surplus was not taken in the fall.

In the spring of 2021, the department completed a spring adaptive cluster sampling (ACS) moose survey within the Unit 22A Central area which resulted in a moose abundance estimate of 766 moose (90% CI: 643-888). These results indicated that the population has remained stable since the population was last surveyed in 2017. Additionally, results from a composition survey completed in 2020 indicated the bull:cow ratio in the area was above the management objective. The results of both the abundance and composition survey led to the decision to remove the quota for the Unit 22A Central moose hunt area beginning in RY21.

Now that there is no quota for the RM841/RM844 hunt, needing to announce the winter RM844 season by emergency order creates unnecessary regulatory burden. The RM844 hunt will still be managed as a registration permit and the department will retain the ability to close the season by emergency order if the harvestable surplus were to be lowered in the future as a result of updated abundance and/or composition data.

If adopted, the department does not anticipate the extended season will create a conservation concern. The RM844 winter hunt is administered as registration permit hunts and managed with harvest quotas. Successful hunters are required to report their harvest to the department within two days of the kill resulting in timely harvest information, and the department has the authority to issue an emergency order closure. Reported harvest for the RM844 hunt has been just 0-2 moose annually for the history of the winter hunt.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F23-059)

PROPOSAL 25

5 AAC 85.045. Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

Close the nonresident moose hunting season in Unit 22C as follows:

Unit 22C - Moose - Nonresident - No Open Season.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Address the nonresident moose hunt in Unit 22C. Currently Unit 22C is under a registration moose hunt with a strict quota system that is often met within the first two days. Many Nome area hunters are not getting a moose.

According to ADF&G data in 2022, 539 registration moose permits were issued to local area residents with 33 moose harvested in Unit 22C. Unit 22B West of the Darby's, Unit 22D Kuzitrin/Pilgrim/Teller, Unit 22D Remainder are all under a registration moose hunt and quota, in all of these units the nonresident moose hunt was the first hunt to be removed from regulation. This would imply local ADF&G staff are being allocative regarding the Unit 22C nonresident moose hunt.

PROPOSED BY: Kawerak, Inc. Melanie Bahnke President (EG-F23-305)

PROPOSAL 26

5 AAC 85.045. Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

Lengthen the nonresident moose hunting season in Unit 22E by two weeks, to open on August 15 as follows:

Expanding the season in order to disperse hunting pressure, as well as allowing hunters opportunities on other species, brown bear and caribou that are in more abundance in August.

Nonresidents: Unit 22E - One bull with 50-inch antlers or antlers with 4 or more brow tines on at least one side by permit DM855 **August 15** [SEPT 1] through September 14.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? DM855 is a drawn hunt limited to ten nonresident moose tags, with the hunting season between September 1-14. Most of these nonresidents have contracted with registered guides to help with their hunt. In the past three years, the number of registered guides in this area has tripled, thus creating competitive hunting practices.

These particular two weeks in September also reduce the successful targeting of other migratory species since caribou have already moved on, and brown bears are seeking other food options along the coast in September.

PROPOSED BY: Justin Horton

(EG-F23-303)

PROPOSAL 27

5 AAC 85.020. Hunting seasons and bag limits for brown bear.

Align the resident seasons for brown bear in Unit 22D and 22E with those in Unit 22B as follows:

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
(20)		
Unit 22(C)		
RESIDENT HUNTERS:		
1 bear every regulatory year by registration permit; or	<u>Aug. 1 – June 30</u> [AUG. 1 – OCT. 31] [APR. 1 – JUNE 30] (subsistence hunt only)	
1 bear every regulatory year by registration permit only	<u>Aug. 1 – June 30</u> [AUG. 1 – OCT. 31] [APR. 1 – JUNE 30]	
...		

Remainder of Unit 22

RESIDENT HUNTERS: Aug. 1 – June **30** [15]
2 bears every regulatory year (subsistence hunt only)
by registration permit; or

RESIDENT HUNTERS: Aug. 1 – June **30** [15]
2 bears every regulatory year

...

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Changing the resident season dates for brown bear in Units 22D and 22E would align the season with Unit 22B. Currently, the registration subsistence hunt (RB699) and general season hunt season for Units 22D and 22E end on June 15, while seasons in Unit 22B end on June 30, which creates unnecessary confusion for hunters and adds complexity to the regulatory language in the regulations book. The registration subsistence hunt (RB699) and registration hunt (RB670) for Unit 22C closes from November 1 to March 31. This proposed season change aligns the season dates for the registration subsistence and other registration permit hunt in Unit 22C with the other hunts in Unit 22B, 22D, and 22E. This should resolve confusion in the hunting regulations.

Changing the resident season dates for brown bear in Unit 22C would align the season with Unit 22B. Currently the season for Unit 22C is managed by a split fall and spring season, while the season in Unit 22B ends on June 30. The split season in Unit 22C creates unnecessary confusion for hunters and adds complexity to the regulatory language in the regulations book.

Very little harvest of brown bears occurs in Unit 22 during November – March so this extended season is not anticipated to have a biological concern.

This proposed season change should resolve confusion in the hunting regulations. Unit 22C brown bear hunting would still be managed by a quota according to the combined harvest under the RB670, DB685, and RB699 permits.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F23-061)

PROPOSAL 28

5 AAC 85.020. Hunting seasons and bag limits for brown bear.

Change the Unit 22D and 22E nonresident brown bear drawing permit hunt to a general season hunt as follows:

I am recommending changing drawing tag DB690 to an over-the-counter tag beginning August 1, 2024. Nonresidents: Unit 22D/E - One bear every regulatory year [BY PERMIT] August 1-June 15.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The brown bear population in Unit 22D and Unit 22E has been increasing, and harvest is low. Currently, the nonresident hunters that apply for the Unit 21 available nonresident bear tags are traveling to this area to primarily hunt caribou and

moose in the fall, with the bear being a bonus species. The caribou tags are over the counter, and moose tags are now a draw. Moose hunters unsuccessful in the draw but successful in drawing the brown bear are not coming to take advantage of the drawn brown bear tag. Changing from a draw to an over-the-counter tag would allow more nonresidents to purchase a metal locking tag and hunt for brown bears in Unit 22D and Unit 22E. This increases revenue for Alaska and the local area and potentially the harvest of more brown bears by guided nonresidents.

PROPOSED BY: Justin Horton

(EG-F23-302)

PROPOSAL 29

5 AAC 85.020. Hunting seasons and bag limits for brown bear.

Increase the number of brown bear drawing permits available in Unit 22B for DB685 to 40 permits, or change DB685 to a registration permit as follows:

I would like the Board of Game to keep the draw hunt number DB685 for Unit 22B and to issue 40 nonresident permits or make Unit 22B a registration hunt. Registration would be better and cheaper for the department.

Every year since the DB685 was adopted it has been undersubscribed. Every year, ADF&G has to go back and forth between draw results and issue undersubscribed permits creating more paperwork and work for both the department and users. As a commercial operator this is difficult at times, but I also understand this is just the cost of doing business. I would like Board of game to not include Unit 22C nonresidents, but to be on a separate DB or RB number. This would allow additional user opportunities for both areas and there not being a biological concern. I don't see a problem with this, nor will see an increase in harvest. This would simply allow nonresidents for an increase of opportunity. If adopted, please make the registration via online or in person at any ADF&G office. If the board does not increase or make Unit 22B a registration hunt, I would ask the board not to change anything to DB685.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? DB685 includes both Unit 22B and Unit 22C and they issue 27 permits for grizzly for nonresidents. Any left over permits after the draw period become undersubscribed. DB685 was adopted in 2012 and has been undersubscribed every year. Twentyseven permits are being issued between the draw and undersubscribed application periods and not all of them are being used. The problem is once they are issued, an individual like myself cannot not book another hunt because of no permits left over. A lot of these permits are being issued and not being filled. In this area there is a one bear bag limit for nonresidents and two bear for residents per regulatory year. There is definitely not a biological concern for grizzly in Unit 22B. As for a matter of fact many locals have told me to harvest more bear. The harvest has been around fifteen bears annually between Units 22B and 22C. Units 22B and 22C should be separated. A majority of the pressure is in Unit 22C around the Nome area. Unit 22B is a much much larger area (164.46 miles by 85.67 miles) than Units 22C (74.55 miles by 38.14 miles) and far more remote than Unit 22C. ADF&G has had one emergency closure in Unit 22C when 25 bears were harvested. I believe with the size of Unit 22B and the number of bears in Unit 22B, it could handle 45 bear harvests.

PROPOSED BY: James Smith

(EG-F23-204)

Utqiagvik Area – Unit 26A

PROPOSAL 30

5 AAC 84.270. Furbearer trapping.

Extend the trapping season to year-round for muskrat in Unit 26A as follows:

Species and Units	Open Season	Bag Limit
(8) Muskrat ...		
Units 19, 20 (except 20(E)), 21, 22, [AND] 24 – 26(B), and 26(C)	Nov. 1 – June 10	No limit.
Units 18, 23, and 26A	No closed season.	No limit.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Muskrat have become more abundant and continue to increase on the North Slope. Residents are interested in being able to harvest muskrat year-round and have no bag limit, similar to the Unit 18 and 23 trapping regulations. A season ending June 10 represents a missed opportunity for residents to harvest muskrat.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F23-067)

PROPOSAL 31

5 AAC 85.045. Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

Liberalize the moose bag limit in a portion of Unit 26A and expand the hunt area as follows:

Unit 26A, that portion west of the eastern shore of Admiralty Bay where the Alaktak River enters, following the Alaktak River to 155°00' W longitude excluding the Colville River drainage—one moose; however, you may not take a calf, or a cow accompanied by a calf July 1-Sept. 14.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Unit 26A portion west of 156 W. longitude excluding the Colville River, one moose bag limit to be reinstated and the boundary moved eastward. This regulation was on the books for many years to provide some opportunity for migratory moose that wandered west of their normal range in Unit 26A. The only reason this proposal was not reauthorized was because of timing of advisory committee meetings. The federal boundary for this hunt has also been amended to extend eastward as follows: Unit 26A, that portion west of the eastern shore of Admiralty Bay where the Alaktak River enters, following the Alaktak River to 155°00' W longitude excluding the Colville River drainage—one moose; however, you may not take a calf, or a cow accompanied by a calf July 1-September 14. It would create less confusion and provide slightly more opportunity for residents to harvest moose if the boundaries were aligned.

PROPOSED BY: North Slope Fish and Game Advisory Committee (EG-F23-192)

Note: The Board of Game does not have authority to delegate the Department of Fish and Game's management of the resources.

PROPOSAL 32

5 AAC 92.540. Controlled use areas.

Change the boundaries and effective dates of the Anaktuvuk Pass Controlled Use Area as follows:

Area Description:

Anaktuvuk Pass Controlled Use Area: the area consists of that portion of Unit 26A including drainages of the Colville River between and including the drainages of the Anaktuvuk River and the Etivluk River (BOUNDED BY A LINE BEGINNING AT 153° 30' W. LONG. ON THE GAME MANAGEMENT BOUNDARY BETWEEN UNITS 24 AND 26(A), NORTH ALONG 153° 30' W. LONG. to 69° N. LAT., EAST ALONG 69° N. LAT. TO 152° 10' W. LONG., SOUTH ALONG 152° 10' W. LONG. TO 68° 30' N. LAT., EAST ALONG 68° 30' N. LAT. TO 150° 40' W. LONG.,) to the game management boundary between Units 24 and 26(A), [AND WESTERLY ALONG THE GAME MANAGEMENT UNIT BOUNDARY TO THE POINT OF ORIGIN AT 153° 30' W. LONG] from July 15 until the caribou migration has moved through Anaktuvuk Pass as determined by the trilateral leadership comprised of the City of Anaktuvuk Pass, the Nunamiut Corporation, and the Naqsrarmiut tribe. The area is closed to the use of aircraft for the harvest of furbearers, sheep, and bear including transportation of hunters, their hunting gear, and or parts of game. (FROM AUG. 15-OCT. 15, IS CLOSED TO THE USE OF AIRCRAFT FOR CARIBOU HUNTING, INCLUDING TRANSPORTATION OF HUNTERS, THEIR HUNTING GEAR, AND/OR PARTS OF CARIBOU.)

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Anaktuvuk Pass Controlled Use Area (CUA) was created to allow for an undisturbed fall migration of caribou to facilitate the subsistence harvest of caribou by the community of Anaktuvuk Pass. Under current regulations, the start date, spatial extent, and allowances for other species to be hunted limit the effectiveness of the CUA. Community members have expressed concern that hunters can still use aircraft to harvest furbearers, sheep, and bear within the CUA. They are also concerned that these activities occur in important migratory areas outside the CUA area which disrupts the caribou migration. Residents observe resident and nonresident hunters at the Anaktuvuk Pass airport in possession of caribou antlers, only, during the CUA closed period. Caribou taken outside the area and aircraft use within the area can deflect leaders in the caribou migration, and as a result, the entire migration beyond the reach of Anaktuvuk Pass resident hunters.

PROPOSED BY: North Slope Fish and Game Advisory Committee

(EG-F23-190)

PROPOSAL 33

5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep.

Reduce the Unit 26A sheep bag limit for residents to one ram with full-curl horn or larger every four regulatory years as follows:

Implement one ram with full-curl horn or larger every four regulatory years for residents. This regulation already exists for nonresidents and as minor as it is, has made a positive impact towards the resource. As different as it is, the one brown bear, every four regulatory years for both residents and nonresidents on Kodiak Island and the Alaska Peninsula has boosted the brown bear population and created the best brown bear hunting opportunity in North America. Very rarely does a brown bear hunter go home empty handed. This same regulation geared towards Dall sheep would have a major impact on the resource in a positive manner.

5 AAC 85.055. Unit 26A Sheep.

Resident hunters: One ram with full-curl horn or larger **every four regulatory years**; Harvest ticket. August 10-September 20.

If nothing is done, the pressure will continue to increase on the Dall sheep resource, which will eventually lead the Board of Game and/or the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to implement restrictions, such as shortening of the season, creation of weapons restriction hunts, limitations or closures placed on different user groups, creation of a statewide draw, and maybe even an emergency closure. Ultimately, it will lead to the loss of another Dall sheep hunting opportunity.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? It is known and documented by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and anyone that has hunted Dall sheep in the past couple of years, that the Dall sheep population is down across the entire state. This downturn has created more pressure on the remaining harvestable population of Dall sheep rams. The 2022 season saw an alarming uptick in sub-legal harvest. User group controversy and overall negative sheep hunting experiences have been expressed profusely by the public. Where there are Dall sheep, there is a noticeable presence of hunters. Which ultimately creates higher than normal hunting pressure, increased competition amongst hunters, and even in some cases hunter on hunter conflicts. In order to create an overall enjoyable hunting experience and keep Dall sheep from going to a draw statewide and most importantly keep sheep on the mountain, a mechanism needs to be put in place to decrease the pressure on the resource, even if it's a minor one.

PROPOSED BY: Spencer Pape, Seth Kroenke, Jeff Rost, and Jon Burrows (EG-F23-254)

PROPOSAL 34

5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep.

Open an archery-only registration permit hunt in portions of Unit 26A for residents only when it is determined sheep hunting can be allowed in those area as follows:

Unit 26A west of the Etivluk River (could also include Unit 26A east of Etivluk River for consistency and to decrease harvest in that area).

Residents only: RS*** One ram, full curl or larger by bow and arrow only. Season: August 10-September 20

Hunters must register for this hunt (in person at license vendors) and report successful harvest within 48 hours.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? If and only if, it is determined the sheep population in Units 23 and 26A can again support hunting, the area should be open to hunting by bow and arrow only. Bow and arrow hunting is an important conservation management tool that provides hunting opportunity while minimizing harvest.

In August of 2014, an emergency order was placed on Unit 23 and 26A (west of the Etivluk River) to close all sheep hunting because of a marked decrease in the sheep population. Sheep population data for this area is not currently publicly available but if the biologists determine that this area can support a limited amount of hunting at any point in the future it would make the most sense to open it as an archery only hunt. Creating an archery hunt would reintroduce hunting opportunity of all hunters.

Archery only hunting does not adversely affect opportunity in any way. It simply requires that hunters use a shorter range weapon. This will make the hunt a little more difficult but will maintain the experience of the hunt. Skilled and/or lucky hunters will still harvest rams but the overall impact on the population will be much lower than that of a rifle hunt.

Going forward, with sheep numbers across the state in general decline and agreement at recent state and national wild sheep conservation meetings that this problem is unlikely to improve in the future (climate change related weather events) we, as hunters, must accept that alternative management options such as temporary hunt closures or draw hunts may become increasingly necessary. Archery hunts provide an appealing alternative because they do not limit opportunity but do limit the harvest. Archery hunts have been used as management tools around the world for this reason and it's time that we consider this option more broadly in Alaska. If or when the sheep population in Units 23 and 26A has recovered enough to support some minimal amount of hunting it should be a registration archery only hunt.

This should be a registration hunt so that ADF&G can monitor the harvest and shut down the hunt if harvest reaches a biological threshold determined by ADF&G.

Of note, in the past there has been some resistance to transitioning existing rifle hunts into archery hunts because of the perception of some that this somehow decreases opportunity. It is, however, well established throughout the United States and in Alaska that all hunters are capable of taking advantage of archery hunts by the simple means of purchasing and learning to shoot a bow. Currently it's possible to

buy an effective hunting bow for less than the cost of most rifles and to learn to shoot accurately in a matter of weeks.

PROPOSED BY: Paul Forward

(EG-F23-298)

Note: This proposal is also scheduled for the March 15 – 22, 2024 Interior and Eastern Arctic Region meeting in Fairbanks, Alaska as Proposal 157. Unit 26A will be considered at the Western Arctic / Western Region meeting. The board may defer final action on both Subunits to the Interior and Eastern Arctic Region meeting.

PROPOSAL 35

5 AAC 85.050. Hunting seasons and bag limits for muskoxen.

Change the Unit 26A and Unit 26B muskox hunt area boundaries to match federal hunt boundaries, and expand the state hunt areas as follows:

Unit 26A, that portion west of the eastern shore of Admiralty Bay where the Alaktak River drains, following the Alaktak River to 155°00' W longitude south to the Units 26A border- one musk ox by Tier II permit Aug. 1-Mar. 15. Unit 26A east and Unit 26B west, that portion from west of the Dalton Highway to the eastern shore of Admiralty Bay where the Alaktak River enters, following the Alaktak River to 155°00' W longitude south to the Unit 26A border—1 muskox by Tier II permit Aug.1-Mar. 15.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Modify the boundary of the western Unit 26A and eastern Unit 26A-26B muskox hunts so the boundaries match the federal hunt boundaries and so the state hunt boundaries abut.

PROPOSED BY: North Slope Fish and Game Advisory Committee

(EG-F23-193)

Kotzebue Area – Unit 23

PROPOSAL 36

5 AAC 85.025. Hunting seasons and bag limits for caribou.

Reduce the caribou bag limit for residents in Unit 23 from five caribou per day to four caribou total, only one of which may be a cow as follows:

5 AAC 85.025(18).

Unit 23 caribou.

RESIDENT HUNTERS: **Four caribou** [FIVE CARIBOU PER DAY], **however, no more than 1 cow may be taken** by permit available online at [http:// hunt.alaska.gov](http://hunt.alaska.gov) or in person in Kotzebue, Utqiagvik, and at license vendors in Units 23 and 26A beginning June 1.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?

The continuous decline of the Western Arctic caribou herd (WACH) and the need to address harvest levels of bulls and in particular cows, to try and halt the decline and allow the population to begin to recover. Currently, the bag limit is five per day during the open periods for bulls and cows. We are proposing a change to four caribou per regulatory year, with no more than one being a cow. We believe a severe reduction is called for under the preservation status of the WACH in the WACH Working Group guidelines for the current population level of 160,000 with year after year declines being observed.

PROPOSED BY: Kotzebue Advisory Committee (HQ-F23-030)

PROPOSAL 37

5 AAC 85.025. Hunting seasons and bag limits for caribou.

Reduce the caribou bag limit for residents in Unit 23 from five caribou per day to four caribou total, only one of which may be a cow as follows:

5 AAC 85.025(18).

Unit 23 caribou.

RESIDENT HUNTERS: **Four caribou per regulatory year** [FIVE CARIBOU PER DAY], **however, no more than 1 cow may be taken** by permit available online at [http:// hunt.alaska.gov](http://hunt.alaska.gov) or in person in Kotzebue, Utqiagvik, and at license vendors in Units 23 and 26A beginning June 1.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Reduce the caribou harvest limit in all of Unit 23 to four caribou (either four bulls or three bulls and one cow) per regulatory year. The Western Arctic caribou herd (WACH) has continued to decline with the most recent estimate being 164,000 caribou. The Northwest Arctic Regional Advisory Council (NWARAC) is greatly concerned about the precipitous decline of the WACH and feel that this action is needed to slow the decline and prevent the herd from reaching a point of no return. The NWARAC feels that the harvest recommendations set forth by the WACH working group would be a starting point for the conservation of the WACH while still

allowing some harvest. The NWARAC recognizes that subsistence users are already facing food insecurities, but this drastic reduction of caribou harvest is a means to help protect the caribou herd while still allowing some harvest.

The NWARAC also submitted a proposal to eliminate nonresident caribou harvest in Unit 23.

PROPOSED BY: Northwest Arctic Regional Advisory Council (NWARAC) (HQ-F23-009)

PROPOSAL 38

5 AAC 85.025. Hunting seasons and bag limits for caribou.

Close all nonresident caribou hunting in Unit 23 as follows:

5 AAC 85.025

Unit 23 caribou.

For all of Unit 23, close all caribou hunts to nonresidents, no open seasons are permitted.

Unit 23, that portion north of and including the Singoalik River:

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS: No Open Season [1 BULL; AUG. 1-SEPT. 30]

Remainder of Unit 23:

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS: No Open Season [1 BULL; AUG. 1-SEPT. 30]

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Western Arctic caribou herd (WACH) population has been in decline for years and the low population level in 2022 is cause for concern. This proposal would close hunting of caribou in Unit 23 year-round to nonresident hunters to help with conservation and recovery of the herd, although still providing some opportunity for resident hunters.

The Northwest Arctic Council also submitted a proposal to reduce harvest limits for resident hunters.

PROPOSED BY: Northwest Arctic Regional Advisory Council (NWARAC) (HQ-F23-010)

PROPOSAL 39

5 AAC 85.020. Hunting seasons and bag limits for brown bear.

Lengthen the brown bear hunting season in Unit 23 for residents to no closed season as follows:

5 AAC: 85.020(21).

Resident hunters: 2 bears every regulatory year; No closed season [AUG. 1-MAY 31].

In addition to other regulations, Residents only subsistence hunters: 2 bears every regulatory year by permit; No closed season [AUG. 1-MAY 31].

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The current state hunting season for brown bear/grizzly bear in Unit 23 for resident general hunting and for resident subsistence hunting by permit is closed in June and July. This proposal would open resident general and resident subsistence hunting in Unit 23 of brown bear to year-round.

Brown bear populations have increased in Unit 23, and there is currently no conservation concern for hunting in June and July, which is when many area residents are at remote subsistence camps yet do not have opportunities to hunt brown bear then. Open hunting year-round would also encourage hunting and assist with the recovery of the declining caribou and moose populations that often fall prey to bears, and increase safety of residents. The current bag limit for residents is two bears per regulatory year of which can be taken in the general hunt or by permit. This regulation change would also match the federal regulations for Unit 23.

PROPOSED BY: Northwest Arctic Regional Advisory Council (NWARAC) (HQ-F23-011)

PROPOSAL 40

5 AAC 85.020. Hunting seasons and bag limits for brown bear.

Lengthen the brown/grizzly bear hunting season in Unit 23 for residents to year-round as follows:

5 AAC 85.020 (21). Hunting seasons and bag limits for brown bear.

Unit 23.

Create no closed season for brown/grizzly bears in Unit 23:

July 1-June 30 [AUG 1 - MAY 31].

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? To encourage hunting of brown/grizzly bears in Unit 23, assist with recovery of caribou and moose populations, and to increase safety of residents. Currently, there are opportunities to harvest brown bears at camps and near Kotzebue during the months of June and July that are passed on because the season is unnecessarily closed - since there is not currently a conservation issue being addressed with the two-month closure. Having an open season all year would allow for harvest of grizzly bears under general hunting license and not as a Defense of Life or Property (DLP.) The current bag limit is two bears per regulatory year.

PROPOSED BY: Kotzebue Fish and Game Advisory Committee (HQ-F23-031)

PROPOSAL 41

5 AAC 85.020. Hunting seasons and bag limits for brown bear.

Lengthen the brown/grizzly bear hunting season in Unit 23 for residents to year-round as follows:

5 AAC 85.020. Hunting seasons and bag limits for brown bear.

Unit 23

Open the brown bear hunting season in Unit 23 as follows: **July 1-June 30** [AUG 1-MAY 31]

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Currently, the brown bear season is closed during the summer months of June and July. During these summer months, bears that roam close to the community can pose a life and safety concern to community members who recreate and engage in subsistence activities.

The brown bear harvest season should be changed for year-round harvest. This will allow residents to address problem bears at the local level. This regulatory change will keep the community safe and would eliminate the paperwork and enforcement resources required with Defense of Life or Property (DLP.)

PROPOSED BY: John Chase (HQ-F23-032)

PROPOSAL 42

5 AAC 85.020. Hunting seasons and bag limits for brown bear.

Consolidate the nonresident brown bear registration permits into a single, unit-wide fall registration permit and a single, unit-wide spring registration permit.

5 AAC 85.020(21). Hunting seasons and bag limits for brown bear.

Units and Bag Limits

Nonresident Open Season

Unit 23

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

Aug. 1-Oct. 31

Apr. 15-May 31

1 bear every regulatory year by registration permit only

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Unit 23 currently has fourteen nonresident registration hunts; seven fall hunts and seven spring hunts that correspond to the seven historic guide use areas. The number of permits issued for each of these hunts is not currently limited.

Nonresident hunters often do not know which of the seven hunt areas they will be hunting and are advised by their guides to acquire permits for each area that the guide operates in. This allows the most flexibility for guides and hunters to work around weather and other field conditions but often leaves the hunter with multiple permits to acquire, carry in the field, and report on post-hunt. It is not unusual for a hunter to be unaware of which hunt area they ultimately hunt in or for them to fail to report on registration permits that were acquired but not hunted on; there is a legal penalty for failing to report. The department proposes to simplify the process for hunters, guides, and department staff by consolidating the fourteen registration hunts into two, unit-wide, registration permits; one for the fall season and one for the spring season. Transitioning to a two-permit structure should not have any biological effects or the distribution of hunt pressure relative to the current structure.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F23-060)
