

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.
--	--	-----------------

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.
---	---------------------------

<u>3</u> [2] antlerless moose; or	Oct. 1—Nov. 30.
--	------------------------

<u>3</u> [2] moose	Dec. 1—Apr. 30
---------------------------	-----------------------

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 antlered bull: or	Sept. 1—Sept. 30
----------------------------	-------------------------

[1 antlerless moose]	[Dec. 1— Mar. 15]
-----------------------------	--------------------------

...

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)
