

**ACR #7** – Change the opening date for moose hunting in Unit 22B Remainder from September 1 to September 6.

**SUBMITTED BY:** City of White Mountain

**CITE THE REGULATION THAT WILL BE CHANGED IF THIS ACR IS HEARD.**

Regulation: 5 AAC 85.045(20) - Moose Hunting Seasons in Unit 22B Remainder

**WHAT IS THE PROBLEM YOU WOULD LIKE THE BOARD TO ADDRESS? STATE IN DETAIL THE NATURE OF THE CURRENT PROBLEM.**

The current moose hunting season for Unit 22B Remainder is structured in a way that significantly limits the opportunities for local subsistence hunters in White Mountain. The season start date of September 1 coincides with poor hunting conditions that make it difficult for local hunters to access moose effectively.

Challenges and poor hunting conditions: Early September in the White Mountain region brings warmer temperatures, resulting in moose staying in higher elevations or more forested areas, which are difficult for hunters to access. Wet conditions and frequent high-water events during this time also make travel by boat or ATV hazardous, as hunters must cross rivers and marshlands that can become impassable. Dense vegetation at the start of the season reduces visibility, making it harder to spot moose.

Additionally, local subsistence hunters are facing inefficiency in their use of fuel. During the first five days of the season, it is rare for hunters in 22B Remainder to successfully catch moose. As a result, significant amounts of fuel are wasted as hunters drive up and down the Niukluk and Fish River and its tributaries searching for moose without success. If the season were to open on September 6, the likelihood of catching a moose would increase, thereby improving the efficiency of fuel use for local hunters.

This proposal seeks to address these challenges by changing the season start date to September 6 to better align with local hunting conditions, allowing White Mountain residents a fairer chance to harvest moose for subsistence.

**WHAT SOLUTION DO YOU PREFER?**

We propose changing the moose hunting season in Unit 22B Remainder from the current start date of September 1 to September 6. This adjustment would apply only to the 22B Remainder area (that portion of Unit 22B West of the Darby Mountains). The focus is on improving hunting opportunities specifically for the local community in 22B Remainder. The proposed new season in Unit 22B Remainder would open on September 6 and close September 20 unless closed by emergency order.

This solution balances the need to support local subsistence hunters while ensuring sustainable moose harvests in 22B Remainder.

**STATE IN DETAIL HOW THIS ACR MEETS THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:**

**1) To correct an error in regulation.**

N/A

**2) To correct an effect of a regulation that was unforeseen when a regulation was adopted.**

When the current regulations were adopted, they did not fully account for the specific challenges faced by local subsistence hunters in White Mountain. The early season start date of September 1, combined with challenging hunting conditions, puts local hunters at a disadvantage compared to non-local hunters who have greater access to transportation and better equipment.

The unforeseen effect is that local hunters must travel greater distances to search for moose, thereby increasing their risk, cost, and effort. Wet, high-water conditions, dense brush, and short daylight hours further hinder their ability to hunt successfully during this time. Hunters are spending every opportunity to be on the Niukluk and Fish River and its tributaries looking for moose burning ample amounts of fuel with a small chance of success. Changing the season start date to September 10 would alleviate these challenges and give White Mountain residents a more reasonable opportunity to harvest moose for subsistence as well as saving a lot of money in fuel costs.

**3) Does the request identify a biological concern for the population or a threat to meeting objectives for the population?**

No, there is no immediate biological concern. Moose population data for Unit 22B Remainder indicates a stable population with a high bull-to-cow ratio. Adjusting the season dates will not negatively affect the population.

**4) Does the request identify an unforeseen, unexpected event or effect that would otherwise restrict or reduce a reasonable opportunity for customary and traditional wildlife uses, as defined in AS 16.05.258(f)?**

While moose hunting is a relatively new practice in the Bering Strait Region, having only become common in the last 50 years, the unforeseen and unexpected event is the challenge of trying to catch a moose during the first days of the season in early September. The September 1 opening date may align well with the Nome School District schedule and Labor Day, providing people in Nome the opportunity to hunt over the long weekend. However, for the villages such as White Mountain and Golovin, the timing of the season opening in relation to Labor Day has little impact. People in the villages are primarily focused on

catching a moose to fill their freezers for the winter, and the urgency of that need remains regardless of a holiday weekend.

The unforeseen effect is that, due to the inefficiency of hunting in the first week of September in 22B Remainder, the effort to catch a moose increases dramatically without a corresponding increase in success. During the first days of the season, it is rare for locals to successfully catch moose, yet the fuel and time spent hunting are considerable. As a result, hunters in White Mountain face a significantly reduced catch-to-effort ratio and burn excessive amounts of fuel, increasing their individual costs.

By moving the season start date to September 6, the likelihood of catching a moose would increase, reducing the amount of fuel wasted and improving the efficiency of local hunting efforts. This change would allow White Mountain residents to hunt more efficiently, saving money and resources while still meeting their subsistence needs.

- 5) Does the request identify an unforeseen, unexpected resource situation where a biologically allowable resource harvest would be precluded by delayed regulatory action and such delay would be significantly burdensome because the resource would be unavailable in the future?**

N/A

**WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF THIS PROBLEM IS NOT SOLVED PRIOR TO THE REGULAR CYCLE?**

If this issue is not addressed, local subsistence hunters in White Mountain will continue to struggle to harvest moose, further exacerbating food insecurity and economic challenges in the community. The continued advantage for non-local hunters, combined with worsening environmental conditions during the early season, will widen the disparity between local hunters and those from outside the area.

**STATE WHY YOUR ACR IS NOT PREDOMINANTLY ALLOCATIVE.**

This ACR is not predominantly allocative. It seeks to address a timing issue specific to the 22B Remainder area that affects the ability of local subsistence hunters to participate in hunting, rather than redistributing resources among user groups. By adjusting the season start date this proposal aims to support local hunters without altering the overall allocation of moose in the unit.

**IF THIS REQUEST IS ALLOCATIVE, STATE THE NEW INFORMATION THAT COMPELS THE BOARD TO CONSIDER AN ALLOCATIVE PROPOSAL OUTSIDE OF THE REGULAR CYCLE.**

N/A

**STATE YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE ISSUE THAT IS THE SUBJECT OF THIS ACR.**

The City of White Mountain is actively involved in this issue. Through ongoing discussions with local hunters, the city council, and community members, we have identified the challenges posed by the current moose hunting regulations. This ACR is submitted on behalf of the local subsistence hunters, who are significantly affected by the current regulations and seek an adjustment to ensure they can meet their subsistence needs.

**STATE WHETHER THIS ACR HAS BEEN CONSIDERED BEFORE, EITHER AS A PROPOSAL OR AS AN ACR, AND IF SO, DURING WHICH BOARD OF GAME MEETING.**

This issue has not been previously considered as an ACR or as a formal proposal to the Board of Game.