

PROPOSAL 44

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

Establish an antlerless moose season in Unit 13C as follows:

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
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(11)

Unit 13

1 moose per regulatory year,

only as follows:

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**1 antlerless moose by
drawing permit only in Unit 13(C);
up to 100 permits may
be issued; a person may not
take a calf or a cow
accompanied by a calf; or**

**Oct. 1–Oct. 31
(General hunt only)**

No open season

....

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Unit 13 has an active intensive management program to benefit moose populations for human consumptive use. Managing a moose population for high levels of human consumptive use when populations are doing well requires harvest of cow moose to utilize additional surplus moose on the landscape and prevent moose populations from reaching or exceeding the carrying capacity of the land. To maintain moose populations within their appropriate population and sex ratio objectives while also providing adequate opportunity to meet harvest objectives, antlerless moose hunts are an essential management tool to adjust the population trajectory through additional sustainable harvest opportunities.

There is a positive customary and traditional use finding for moose in all of Unit 13, and an amount reasonably necessary for subsistence of 300–600 moose. The current population abundance objective for Unit 13C is 2,000–3,000 moose. Moose minimum counts in Unit 13C were near record highs from 2013 to 2019; that level of abundance has not been seen in Unit 13C since the late 1980s and late 1990s (Figure 44-1). With no cow harvest opportunity, the population peaked with an abundance index of nearly 4,000 moose in 2015, nearly 3,600 moose in 2019, and has since declined to just over 2,500 moose in 2023, suggesting that Unit 13C cannot sustain those high levels of moose abundance over the long-term. The calf-to-cow ratio in Unit 13C has shown a declining trend over the past decade, which suggests the population may have become less

productive as it approached or exceeded the carrying capacity of the area. Wolf control has been suspended in Unit 13C since 2019 due to the high numbers of moose and lack of cow harvest opportunity.

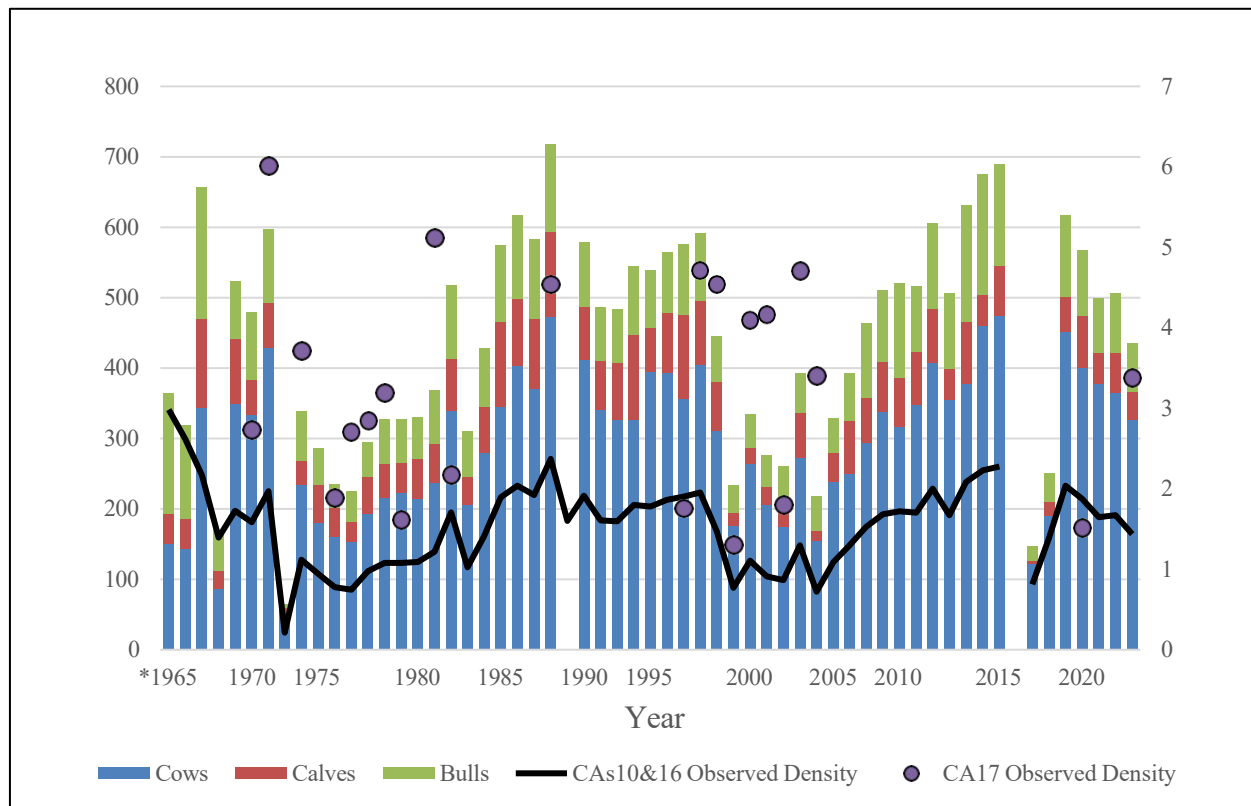


Figure 44-1. Moose minimum counts and observed densities in Unit 13C, RY65-23. In 1965, 1966, 1968, 2017, and 2018 only one count area was completed.

After considering a Unit 13 proposal during the 2015 Board of Game meeting, which was submitted by the public to increase the number of cow permits issued annually, the board directed the department to issue enough permits to allow the harvest of up to one percent of the cow population when the moose population is above the midpoint of the population objective for the subunit.

Recent composition surveys indicate that the bull-to-cow ratio has been hovering at or below 25 bulls per 100 cows, (the current objective for Unit 13C) indicating that there are no additional bulls available for harvest. Stabilizing the population within the objectives will allow for a more productive population, producing more bulls as well as cows for an increase in the overall harvestable surplus. Population growth cannot be controlled through bull harvest only. Waiting to implement cow harvest after a population has peaked and beginning to decline is short-sighted and ineffective. The tool needs to be available when a population is growing toward the higher objective with the understanding that hunting permits will not be issued when the population is below the midpoint of the objectives.

If antlerless moose hunting opportunities are not available in Unit 13C, the intensive management

program and objectives will likely need to be reduced to maintain the moose population within a population size range that does not result in nutritional limitations for the moose and to achieve the harvest objectives recommended by the public, advisory committees, and the board.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local fish and game advisory committee?

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

(HQ-F24-080)
