

PROPOSAL 135

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

Board of Game Finding #2015-211-BOG: Recommendation to ADF&G Provided during the Southcentral Region meeting

Change the 2015 Board of Game findings to manage the mortality cap in Units 7 and 15 from a calendar year to a regulatory year or split the mortality cap into spring and fall caps as follows.

What solution do you recommend? In other words, if the board adopted your solution, what would the new regulation say?

Change the RB300 brown bear registration hunt to a regulatory year framework.

The 2015-211-BOG Finding (below) directs the Department to manage the RB300 brown bear hunt and mortality caps on a calendar year framework. With the extension of the spring brown bear baiting season, this likely guarantees that the season will close by emergency order prior to June 30th, as it did last year, resulting in a complete loss of fall season hunting opportunity.

Changing the RB300 hunt to a regulatory year framework would start us off on July 1st every year in which mortality caps come into play. This ensures a fall season will take place.

The spring season will likely still be closed by emergency order at some point if the season remains the same due to mortality caps being reached, but moving to a regulatory year framework allows hunting opportunity for both the spring and fall seasons.

We considered recommending shortening the spring season to end on June 15th but believe this is a better option than shortening the spring season as it may allow the spring season to continue beyond June 15th.

Based on discussions with Department biologists, we do not support increasing the mortality caps.

Recommended changes to the Findings for the Alaska Board of Game

New Text **underlined** [DELETED TEXT BRACKETED]

2015-211-BOG

The Board of Game finds as follows, based on information provided by Department staff, Alaska residents and other wildlife users:

The Board recommended the Department take the following management action:

Establish a maximum human-caused mortality quota of no more than 50-60 brown

bears, with no more than 8-12 of these adult (at least 5 years old) sows, [PER CALENDAR YEAR] **per regulatory year** beginning after January 1, 2015, for Units 7 and 15.

Other Options

Another option the board could consider is breaking up the mortality caps into separate spring and fall season caps. For example: the spring season could close by EO if eight sows are taken, to

include both hunting caused mortality and non-hunting mortality. That leaves four sows left on the cap for the fall season. The total bear harvest cap could also be similarly separated out.

Unit 7 and 15 could also have separate mortality caps.

Again, the primary goal of this proposal is to ensure there is some guaranteed fall brown bear hunting opportunity.

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

Loss of fall RB300 brown bear hunting opportunity in Units 7 and 15.

At the previous 2023 Region II meeting, the board passed Proposal 134, which extended the RB300 brown bear spring season 30 days and opened the fall season 20 days earlier. The RB300 brown bear season is currently August 10 – June 30.

These are the Department’s comments on Proposal 134: *“The proposed increased season length, which will allow hunters to harvest brown bears over bait, will likely increase spring brown bear harvest and adult female harvest based on previous harvest trends. This additional harvest in the spring will likely result in seasons closing by Emergency Order when mortality caps are reached, which will reduce fall harvest opportunities.”*

The extension of the spring baiting season by 30 days led to exactly what the Department said in their comments would likely happen: brown bear harvests overall increased and the sow mortality cap was reached, resulting in the RB300 hunt being closed by emergency order on June 27, 2024. While the spring 2025 harvest is yet unknown, it seems likely the longer RB300 spring season will continue to result in an emergency order to close the hunt down due to either reaching the maximum human caused mortality of brown bears or the maximum human caused mortality of sows.

Below is a chart from ADF&G showing the hunting mortality and non-hunting human caused mortality of all brown bears in Units 7 & 15 for calendar years 2023 and 2024:

Table 1. Annual occurrences of known human-caused mortalities of brown bears in Game Management Units 7 & 15 in Alaska.

Calendar Year	Hunting Mortality	Non-Hunting Human Caused Mortality	Total
2023	41	7	48
2024	56	9	65

As you can see, more bears overall were taken by hunting after the season was extended in 2023.

The next chart below includes only sows, showing that more sows were taken by hunting after the season was extended in 2023.

Table 2. Annual occurrences of known human-caused mortalities of adult female brown bears in Game Management Units 7 & 15 in Alaska.

Calendar Year	Hunting Mortality	Non-Hunting Human Caused Mortality	Total
2023	7	3	10
2024	10	4	14

The next chart below shows sow hunting harvest dates in Units 7 and 15 for the 2024 spring season, showing that 60% of the sow harvest occurred during the June extension of the spring season:

Table 3. Date of Kill and bait usage of adult female brown bears harvested in Game Management Units 7 & 15 in Alaska.

DOK	Bait
5/9/2024	Y
5/13/2024	N
5/16/2024	Y
5/23/2024	Y
6/15/2024	Y
6/17/2024	Y
6/21/2024	Y
6/21/2024	Y
6/24/2024	Y
6/25/2024	N

The goal of this proposal is to ensure that there is an opportunity to harvest a brown bear under the RB300 registration hunt during the fall season in Units 7 and 15.

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

RHAK always contacts department biologists when working on proposals. Thanks to department staff for answering questions and providing harvest information!

PROPOSED BY: Resident Hunters of Alaska (OI-F25-186)
