

## **PROPOSAL 259**

### **5 AAC 85.045(a)(19)(B). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.**

Reauthorize a winter antlerless moose season during March in a portion of Unit 21D.

| <b>Units and Bag Limits</b>                                                                                                                                | <b>Resident<br/>Open Season<br/>(Subsistence and<br/>General Hunts)</b> | <b>Nonresident<br/>Open Season</b> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| (19)                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                         |                                    |
| ...                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                         |                                    |
| Unit 21(D), that portion south of<br>the South bank of the Yukon River,<br>downstream of the up-river<br>entrance of Kala Slough and west<br>of Kala Creek |                                                                         |                                    |
| RESIDENT HUNTERS:                                                                                                                                          |                                                                         |                                    |
| ...                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                         |                                    |
| 1 moose, by registration permit<br>only, up to 15 days during March;<br>however, a person may not take a<br>cow accompanied by a calf                      | (Season to be<br>announced)                                             |                                    |
| ...                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                         |                                    |

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

Antlerless moose hunting seasons must be reauthorized annually. The goal is to provide additional harvest opportunity and meet harvest objectives. This harvest opportunity of antlerless moose recently emerged because the moose population in the Kaiyuh Flats is increasing rapidly, especially the number of cows in the population. This reauthorization will likely improve or maintain hunting opportunity. If this antlerless moose hunt is not reauthorized, opportunity to utilize a harvestable surplus of cow moose would be lost, and the Alaska Department of Fish & Game's (department) ability to meet IM harvest objectives could be reduced. In addition, slowing the rate of increase, rather than allow the population to go through dramatic rates of expansion and contraction, is appropriate for providing stable hunting opportunity.

The Intensive Management (IM) harvest objective for Unit 21D is 450–1,000 moose. The 10-year average estimated harvest during 2015–2024 was 388 moose, which includes the reported and estimated unreported harvest. The annual estimated harvest has not met the harvest objective since

2003 when the estimated harvest was 489 moose. Additional harvest from this hunt will help make progress toward achieving the IM harvest objectives without reducing bull-to-cow ratios to low levels. Subsistence hunters will benefit from the opportunity to harvest cow moose.

Analysis of three Trend Count Areas (TCAs) (Squirrel Creek, Pilot Mountain, and Kaiyuh Slough TCAs) within the Kaiyuh Flats in this hunt area demonstrated an increasing trend in moose abundance from 2001 to present. Geospatial Population Estimate data also increased from 1,897 ( $\pm 11\%$ ) moose in 2011 to 4,116 ( $\pm 10\%$ ) moose in 2017. Moose twinning data for the hunt area also showed high twinning rates 2004-2024 (avg. = 36.1%), although the five-year twinning rate average (2020-2024) was 27.8%.

The portion of 21D affected by this reauthorization is approximately 21% (2,559 mi<sup>2</sup>) of Unit 21D (12,093.6 mi<sup>2</sup>). Moose abundance in this area was estimated at 4,000–4,500 moose, which is approximately 39–44% of the total moose estimated in Unit 21D at 10,478 moose ( $\pm 1,572$ ) in 2024. The total 21D moose population estimate was above the IM population objective for all of Unit 21D (12,093.6 mi<sup>2</sup>) of 9,000–10,000 moose.

**PROPOSED BY:** Alaska Department of Fish & Game

HQ-F25-041

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