

Proposal 146

5 AAC 92.010(l); 92.165(a). Harvest tickets and reports; Sealing of bear skins and skulls.

Remove the requirement for hunters to possess a black bear harvest ticket prior to hunting black bears in Units 12 and 20E, and require all black bears taken in Units 12 and 20E to be sealed as follows:

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

5 AAC 92.010(l)

For black bear, a person may not hunt black bear in Units 1-7, 11, 13-16, [AND] 20(A), 20(B), 20(C), 20(D), and 20(F) , except when a permit is required, unless the person has in possession a harvest ticket for the species and has obtained a harvest report (issued with the harvest ticket).

5 AAC 92.165(a)

Sealing is required for hides and skulls of brown bear taken in any unit in the state, hides and skulls of black and brown bear taken in any unit in the state before the hide or skull is sold, hides and skulls of black bear of any color variation taken from January 1 through May 31, and skulls of black bear of any color variation taken from June 1 through December 31 in Units 1-7, 12, 14(A), 14(C), 15-7, [AND] 20(B), and 20(E). The seal must remain on the skin until the tanning process has commenced. A person may not possess or transport the untanned skin or skull of a bear taken in a unit where sealing is required, or export from the state the untanned skin or skull of a bear taken anywhere in the state, unless the skin or the skull, or both as required in this section have been sealed by a department representative within 30 days after the taking, or a lesser time if requested by the department...

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

Harvest ticket requirements for black bear were adopted by the Board of Game in the late 2000s with the intent of improving effort data in areas experiencing high hunting pressure. However, many hunters harvest black bears incidentally while targeting other species or opportunistically while in the field. As a result, reported days hunted may be biased or mischaracterized. In addition, hunters may pursue black bears in this incidental manner across multiple game management units, which cannot be effectively captured under the current reporting framework.

Black bear populations are not currently monitored in Units 12 and 20E, as survey and inventory methods have proven inefficient and costly relative to the level of harvest and hunting pressure. Harvest levels in these units are estimated to be sustainable for Units 12 and 20E, with a combined annual harvest of 49–72 bears (total = 326) recorded between regulatory year (RY) 20 and RY24. During this same period, only 66 bears were sealed, likely to meet export

requirements. Currently, success and effort data are not needed to manage black bear populations in Units 12 and 20E.

Implementing mandatory sealing and removing harvest ticket requirements could provide a more reliable method for documenting harvest trends and facilitate collection of additional geographic and biological data. Sealing also creates opportunities for premolar aging and tissue collection by the department, which may yield more meaningful population indices than effort, success, or harvest data alone, while also reducing reporting requirements for hunters. This change would not require any modification to the salvage requirement regulations because all areas with mandatory sealing are already addressed under 5 AAC 92.220(a)(3), which specifies salvage requirements for black bears taken in units where sealing is required. However, the change will alter the salvage requirements for black bears taken in Units 12 and 20E because salvage requirements are tied to sealing requirements. Currently, salvage requirements for black bears taken in Units 12 and 20E requires only the edible meat be salvaged if taken between January 1 and May 31, and either the edible meat or the hide must be salvaged if taken between June 1 and December 31. By requiring sealing, hunters that harvest a black bear in Units 12 and 20E will be required to salvage the edible meat, the hide, and the skull of black bears taken between January 1 and May 31, and either the skull and the edible meat or the skull and the hide of black bears taken between June 1 and December 31.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

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