

Proposal 49

5 AAC 92.067. Units 22 and 23 brown bear permits.

Convert nonresident brown bear hunt DB690 in Units 22D and 22E from a Drawing Permit hunt to a Registration Permit hunt as follows:

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

Convert nonresident brown bear hunt DB690 in Units 22D and 22E from a Drawing Permit hunt to a Registration Permit hunt, with harvest quota to be set annually by ADF&G and season to be closed by emergency order when quota is reached.

Current regulation (5 AAC 92.086, Unit 22D and 22E, nonresident brown bear):

Open to: Nonresidents

Unit/Area: 22D, 22E

Bag Limit & Special Instructions: One bear every regulatory year by permit. If undersubscribed, surplus permits will be available; contact ADF&G in Nome at (907)443-2271

Permit/Hunt #: DB690

Season: Aug.1 - June 15

Proposed regulation (additions in bold underline; deletions in strikethrough):

Open to: Nonresidents

Unit/Area: 22D, 22E

Bag Limit & Special Instructions: One bear every regulatory year by registration permit. Harvest quota to be announced; season will be closed by emergency order when quota is reached. ~~If undersubscribed, surplus permits will be available; contact ADF&G in Nome at (907)443-2271~~

Permit/Hunt #: ~~DB690~~ **RB (new number to be assigned)**

Season: Aug.1 - June 15

Note: All other nonresident brown bear requirements remain unchanged, including mandatory guide accompaniment (AS 16.05.407) and evidence of sex requirements.

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

STATEMENT OF ISSUE

Drawing Permit Hunt DB690, the nonresident brown bear hunt for Units 22D and 22E, has issued 30 permits annually for the past five regulatory years, totaling **150 permits issued**. During that same five-year period, total nonresident brown bear harvest in Units 22D and 22E was **5 animals** — a utilization rate of approximately **3.3 percent of issued permits**.

ADF&G has established an acceptable harvest level of approximately **30 brown bears annually** in Units 22D and 22E. The current drawing permit structure is therefore producing nonresident harvest at less than 4 percent of the established sustainable yield, while the resource remains substantially underutilized.

The cause of this underutilization is structural, not a reflection of low demand. Nonresident access to Units 22D and 22E is guide-dependent and economically viable primarily as part of a multi-species trip. The nonresident moose draw permit availability in the area is limited. The majority of hunters who obtain DB690 permits do not travel to the unit because the moose hunt that would anchor their expedition was not obtained through the draw. Bear-only expeditions to Units 22D and 22E are not economically feasible for most nonresident hunters given the remote access costs involved. As a result, DB690 bear permits are routinely obtained but not used, producing a pattern of near-zero nonresident harvest year after year despite full permit issuance.

This underutilization occurs against a management backdrop in which Alaska resident hunters in the same Units 22D and 22E are currently authorized to take **two brown bears per regulatory year under an open general season requiring no permit of any kind**. The Board has therefore already determined that the brown bear population in these units is biologically capable of sustaining broad, unrestricted hunting access. The drawing permit restriction imposed solely on nonresident hunters is producing no conservation benefit and is inconsistent with the unrestricted management approach applied to resident hunters in the identical area.

A registration hunt structure would allow nonresident hunters to access the resource without advance drawing, while retaining full ADF&G management flexibility through emergency order closure authority at the established acceptable harvest quota. Given the remote geographic character of Units 22D and 22E, natural logistical barriers will continue to limit total nonresident harvest well below the sustainable yield ceiling. The proposed change aligns nonresident access with the biological reality that the Board has already acknowledged by authorizing a two-bear, no-permit general season for residents in the same units.

EXPECTED EFFECTS OF PROPOSED CHANGE

Biological: Minimal to none. The brown bear population in Units 22D and 22E is currently subject to a two-bear, no-permit general season for residents. ADF&G's acceptable harvest level of 30 bears annually reflects a population capable of sustaining significant harvest pressure. Nonresident harvest under a registration hunt, given remote access constraints, is unlikely to approach the established quota. ADF&G retains full emergency order closure authority.

Management: Improved. A registration permit system with a harvest quota and mandatory reporting will generate more complete harvest data than the current draw system, in which most permits go unused and harvest is near zero. ADF&G can adjust the annual quota as population data warrants.

Public Opportunity: Increased for nonresident hunters and the licensed guide industry operating in Units 22D and 22E. The change enables outfitters to offer bear hunting as a standalone nonresident product rather than as an add-on to a moose draw that the majority of applicants do not obtain.

Resident Opportunity: Unchanged. Resident hunters in Units 22D and 22E retain their existing two-bear, no-permit general season. A nonresident sub-quota may be established within the overall acceptable harvest level if the Board determines this is appropriate to protect resident opportunity.

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

PROPOSED BY: James Fejes (OI-F26-071)
