

5 AAC 85.045(a)(16). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

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

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
(16)		
Unit 18 Kuskokwim Area, that portion easterly of a line from the mouth of the Ishkowik River to the closest point of Dall Lake then to east bank of the Johnson River at its entrance into Nunavakanukakslak Lake (60 59.41' N. latitude, 162 22.14' W. longitude), continuing up-river along a line one-half mile south and east of, and parallel- ing a line along the southerly bank of the Johnson River to the confluence of the east bank of Crooked Creek, then con- tinuing upriver along the east bank of Crooked Creek to the outlet at Arhymot lake, then following the south bank of Arhymont Lake easterly to the Unit 18 border and north of and including the Eek River drainage		
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1 antlerless moose by	Sept. 1-Oct. 15	No open season.

drawing permit only, up to 100 permits may be issued

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Unit 18, that portion that drains into Kuskokwim Bay south of the Carter Bay drainage

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1 moose by registration permit only; to be announced by emergency order	Dec. 1—Mar. 31 (Season to be announced)	No open season.
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Remainder of Unit 18

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

3 moose; of which only 1 may be an antlered bull; a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf; or	Aug. 1—Sept. 30
3 antlerless moose; or	Oct. 1—Nov. 30.
3 moose	Dec. 1—April 30.

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 antlerless moose	Dec. 1— Mar. 15
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What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?

To be retained, the antlerless moose seasons in Unit 18 must be reauthorized annually by the Board of Game (board). The current antlerless hunts in the Remainder of Unit 18 were adopted at the January 2014 board meeting in Kotzebue. The current antlerless hunt in the Goodnews Hunt area and nonresident antlerless hunt was adopted at the January 2017 board meeting in Bethel. The Kuskokwim hunt was adopted at the January 2024 board meeting in Kotzebue. Both the Remainder and Goodnews antlerless hunts were amended at the board meeting in 2020 in Nome. The board has previously

reauthorized the antlerless moose season for resident hunts in Unit 18 remainder for regulatory year (RY) 2016 through RY2026. This proposal requests reauthorization for RY2027.

Implementation of antlerless hunts began in 2007 and has continued each year due to increased moose abundance, productivity, and population growth along the Yukon River drainage in Unit 18. Based on the steady growth in moose populations and productivity, ADF&G proposes continued antlerless moose hunts in the Remainder of Unit 18.

Within the areas near the Yukon River, the moose population is estimated to be 20,000 animals with calf:cow ratios ranging from 36:100 to 61:100, and twinning rates from 15% to 50% for all areas. Population growth and range expansion continues in this portion of Unit 18. Although the population has declined by about 20% in the past 5 years it is still remains near historic highs.

Although the current year’s harvest data in the Remainder of Unit 18 has not been finalized because the season is still open, harvest is expected to be similar to the past 4 years and well below sustained yield for this robust population. In RY2024 the antlerless harvest in Unit 18 remainder was 147 moose. Allowing antlerless harvest will benefit hunters through increased opportunity, and any increases in harvest may help slow the growth rate of the population in this portion of Unit 18. Additionally, the nonresident antlerless moose hunt has had very low participation, and in 2024 there were 4 cows harvested by nonresidents. Nonresident harvest has been eight antlerless moose (all cows) in the previous past 5 years.

The moose population in the Goodnews River drainage had grown steadily in the past 15 years following a closure in 2004. The fall hunt had a quota of 10 for the first few years of the hunt and recently increased to 45. Even though the department has not closed the season by emergency order, in the past few years the quota was not meet. In the 7 years that the winter hunt has been held, harvest has been low (with a range of 0-6 animals harvested). The March of 2024 survey found 450 moose and, based on the steady growth in moose populations and productivity, the department proposes continued antlerless moose hunts in the Goodnews River Drainage.

In January of 2024 at the board meeting in Kotzebue, the board adopted a drawing hunt for antlerless moose on the Kuskokwim River. The first hunt was held in the fall of 2025. In February of 2024, the midpoint of the population estimate was 3,336 moose in Zone 1 of the Kuskokwim hunt area. In the same month, an additional 2,327 moose were counted in a minimum count of zone 2 of the hunt area. In the DM612 hunt, in the fall of 2025, the department issued 100 permits. Of these, 84 permit holders reported hunting, and 49 harvested antlerless moose. Following a moratorium the Kuskokwim moose population has experienced rapid growth and range expansion and is starting to see early signs of resource limitation and high browse removal rates.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F26-012)
