

Proposal 83

5 AAC 92.08. Unlawful methods of taking game; exceptions.

In all of unit 20 cellular cameras maybe used during bear baiting seasons. Cameras must be within a 100 yds of bait as follows:

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

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

The current prohibition in 5 AAC 92.080(7)(H) bans any “camera or other sensory device that can send messages through wireless communication.” This prevents the use of stationary cellular trail cameras at registered bear bait stations in Unit 20. Bear baiting is already a legal, selective management tool (not traditional “fair chase”), yet hunters are forced to make repeated, often unnecessary physical checks of bait sites. This results in hundreds of dollars in wasted fuel.

If nothing changes, baiters will continue burning unnecessary fuel (Interior Alaska gasoline currently averages \$3.34/gallon in Fairbanks and up to \$6+ in rural areas) on multiple weekly trips per station. Youth and less-mobile hunters will be discouraged because real-time viewing from home is impossible. Cellular cameras can allow hunters to notify AWT of possible poaching or site tampering without having to encounter the perpetrator. Cellular cameras change none of the biological outcomes: bag limits remain three black bears per year (no closed season) and one brown/grizzly bear per year (with subunit-specific seasons and permits), bait stations stay registered, and bears continue to come and go as they please.

Facts supporting adoption:

- Alaska’s statewide black bear population is stable at approximately 100,000 animals. In GMU 20D (a representative subunit), the population is healthy and stable with an estimated 750 adult bears; average annual harvest is only 37 bears (66% male, just 25% taken over bait), well within sustainable objectives (≤ 15 south and ≤ 35 north of the Tanana River). Similar low, sustainable harvest occurs across Unit 20.
- In the vast majority of U.S. states where cellular cameras are fully legal, there is no evidence of increased overharvest or population declines—harvest remains controlled by bag limits and seasons, exactly as it would in Unit 20.
- Cameras provide real safety and efficiency benefits without any downside: they notify hunters only when activity occurs, reducing total trips, habitat disturbance, and the ability to prosecute hunter harassment or poaching.

Other solutions (more frequent physical checks or non-cellular cameras) were rejected because they do not deliver real-time data, cost savings, or safety improvements. Cellular cameras cannot kill animals or exceed bag limits—they simply let hunters (and their kids at home) watch in real time.

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

Yes, the Fairbanks AC developed this proposal.

PROPOSED BY: Fairbanks Fish & Game Advisory Committee

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