

**DRAFT
RECOMMENDATIONS
BOARD OF GAME PROPOSALS**

Region I Proposals 1- 48

November 2008

Alaska Department of Fish & Game

Division of Wildlife Conservation

The department's recommendations are based on analysis of the proposals with available information. These recommendations may change after further analysis based on public comment or additional information.

PROPOSAL 1

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would change the starting date for trapping wolves in Unit 1A from November 10 to November 1.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Amend and Adopt**

RATIONALE: The author’s rationale for this proposal is that the wolf trapping season opened on November 1 prior to 1983 and should be returned to that starting date. He states that the earlier start date would allow hunters to begin trapping wolves while also hunting deer during the November deer rut, when he believes deer are very vulnerable to predation by wolves.

The Department recommends amending this proposal to include Units 1, 3 and 5, and adopting the season change. Most bears are in hibernation by late October so catching them in wolf traps during this period should not be a concern. Starting the season on November 1 will provide additional opportunity for those interested in trapping wolves, without presenting any obvious conservation concerns. The department supports a return to this earlier starting date.

PROPOSAL 2

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would change the management objective for wolves in Unit 1A from 20 per year to 25 per year.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Take No Action**

RATIONALE: This proposal does not require action by the board. The department has the authority to change the guideline harvest level without a regulatory change.

PROPOSAL 3

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Reduce the bag limit for deer from 4 bucks to 2 bucks on the Cleveland Peninsula in Unit 2. The Cleveland Peninsula is split between Units 1A and 1B and this change would make the entire Cleveland Peninsula deer bag limit uniform at 2 bucks per hunter per year.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Adopt**

RATIONALE: Staff proposal, see issue statement.

PROPOSAL 4

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would change the bag limit for mountain goats in Unit 1A from one goat to two goats.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Do Not Adopt**

RATIONALE: The mountain goat bag limit in Unit 1A has varied between one and two goats during the past 20 years. Most recently the bag limit was changed from 2 goats to 1 at the 2004 board meeting. At that meeting the Cleveland Peninsula was closed to goat hunting due to conservation concerns, and the bag limit for goats in the remainder of Unit 1A was reduced. The justification to reduce the bag limit in all of Unit 1A was to avoid future closures in other locations of Unit 1A due to conservation concerns.

Although goats are widely distributed, harvest is often localized around access points. By limiting hunters to a single goat, we can distribute the allowable harvest across a greater number of hunters, thereby providing more hunters with the opportunity to harvest a goat.

PROPOSAL 5

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would reduce the discretionary authority for bear bait permit conditions.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Take No Action**

RATIONALE: Refer to Proposal 41. The department will clarify the current language regarding discretionary authority relative to bear bait registration permits.

PROPOSAL 6

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would close the fall hunting season for black bears in Unit 2.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Take No Action**

RATIONALE: The department has submitted two proposals that address concerns with black bear harvest and black bear management in Unit 2 along with other areas in Southeast Alaska. The department recommends the board take no action on this proposal and consider proposals 36 and 38.

PROPOSAL 7

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would close a portion of Unit 2 to black bear hunting in the vicinity of El Capitan passage and Dry Pass on Prince of Wales Island.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Take No Action**

RATIONALE: This proposal addresses an overharvest of bears on a portion of Unit 2. The department recommends the board take no action on this proposal and consider proposal 36.

PROPOSAL 8

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: For Kuiu Island in Unit 3, shorten the marten trapping season for residents to Dec 1–[FEB. 15] **Dec 15**, close the nonresident marten trapping season and create a Kuiu Island Management Area that is closed to the use of motorized land vehicles for trapping marten.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Adopt**

RATIONALE: Staff proposal, see issue statement.

PROPOSAL 9

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Modify the hunting season for elk on Etolin Island in Unit 3 to provide alternating bow and rifle drawing permit hunts during the September rut.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Do Not Adopt**

RATIONALE: The department currently has a number of uncertainties regarding the status of the Unit 3 elk population. The rugged terrain and densely forested environment in Southeast Alaska precludes accurate aerial surveys of the Unit’s elk population and limits our understanding of important elk population parameters such as status and trend, bull:cow ratios, productivity, and recruitment into the adult population. Despite liberal hunting seasons and several increases in the number of permits issued the Unit 3 elk harvest has declined in recent years.

Elk are particularly vulnerable to harvest during the rut. Therefore, hunters have been restricted to archery tackle. Allowing the use of high-powered rifles during the elk rut would risk overharvest of bulls and could disrupt breeding activity.

The department recently initiated a study in designed to obtain information about daily and seasonal elk activity and movement patterns, habitat use, and home range size. Staff biologists will also evaluate dietary overlap and potential interspecific competition between introduced elk and native Sitka black-tailed deer. Finally, we will attempt to use DNA extracted from elk fecal pellets to identify individual elk as part of a mark-recapture population estimation effort. Results from this ongoing work will be used to establish future elk hunting seasons and bag limits in the unit. The department recommends that until such time that we have additional information on important elk population parameters, we should continue to restrict hunting activity during the rut to archery-only.

PROPOSAL 10

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Modify the moose antler restriction in RM038 to allow the harvest of bulls with 2 brow tines on both sides in addition to the existing spike-fork, 3 or more brow tines on one side, or 50-inch antler criteria.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Adopt**

RATIONALE: Staff proposal, see issue statement.

PROPOSAL 11

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Modify the moose antler restrictions in Units 1B and 3 to allow the harvest of bulls with spike, fork, 2 brow tines on both sides, or 50-inch spread. The intent of the proponent was to allow the harvest of bulls with 2 brow tines on both sides “in addition to,” the existing spike, fork, 3 or more brow tines on one side, or 50-inch spread antler criteria. It was also the intent of the proponent to apply the new regulation to the entire RM038 hunt area which includes Units 1B, 3 and the extreme southern portion of 1C.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Take No Action**

RATIONALE: See proposal 10.

PROPOSAL 12

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would extend the wolf hunting season in Unit 3 by 31 days, from August 1 – [APRIL 30] **May 31** and the season will close when 20 wolves are harvested.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Do Not Adopt**

RATIONALE: The Unit 3 wolf harvest is typically incidental to other hunting activities, however, a small number of trappers focus efforts specifically on wolves and account for the majority of wolves taken. Hunters and trappers have harvested 203 wolves in Unit 3 over the last 5 years, with an average unit-wide harvest of 41 wolves annually.

While it is difficult from sealing records to differentiate between wolves harvested by hunters and those taken by trappers, sealing records indicate that 79 wolves were taken by ground shooting from 2003–2007, for an annual average of 16 wolves. Alaska residents harvested most (87%) of wolves taken in the unit, with local residents accounting for 74% of the Unit 3 wolf harvest.

An accurate population estimate is not available for Unit 3 wolves, but anecdotal information gathered from hunters, trappers, pilots, and department personnel suggests the population is stable. Unit 3 wolf hunting season dates have been adjusted by the board twice in the last 8 years

(2002 and 2004). The current Unit 3 wolf hunting and trapping season end date of April 30 is consistent for Units 1 and 3–5.

The department does not support this proposal because the additional 31 days would extend the hunting season into the peak of the wolf pupping season. The department believes the existing 9-month hunting season and 5-wolf bag limit provides ample opportunity to harvest wolves. Extending the season to May 31 will not significantly increase wolf harvest opportunities. Declines in pelt quality throughout the spring reduce pelt values, as well as interest in harvesting wolves. The department does not support a 20-wolves harvest limit in the unit as this would unnecessarily restrict opportunity and there is not a conservation concern for the current harvest.

Wolf populations in the unit are healthy and harvest during the later part of the season is typically low. It is anticipated that most harvest likely to occur during May would be by nonresidents who purchase a wolf tag, hoping for an opportunity to harvest a wolf incidental to spring black bear hunting.

PROPOSAL 13

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would extend the wolf hunting season in Unit 3 by 61-days, from August 1 – [APRIL 30] to **June 30**.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Do Not Adopt**

RATIONALE: The Unit 3 wolf harvest is typically incidental to other hunting activities, however, a small number of trappers focus efforts specifically on wolves and account for the majority of wolves taken. Hunters and trappers have harvested 203 wolves in Unit 3 over the last 5 years, with an average unit-wide harvest of 41 wolves annually.

While it is difficult from sealing records to differentiate between wolves harvested by hunters and those taken by trappers, sealing records indicate that 79 wolves were taken by ground shooting from 2003–2007, for an annual average of 16 wolves. Alaska residents harvested most (87%) of wolves taken in the unit, with local residents accounting for 74% of the Unit 3 wolf harvest.

An accurate population estimate is not available for Unit 3 wolves, but anecdotal information gathered from hunters, trappers, pilots, and department personnel suggests the population is stable. Unit 3 wolf hunting season dates have been adjusted by the board twice in the last 8 years (2002 and 2004). The current Unit 3 wolf hunting and trapping season end date of April 30 is consistent for Units 1 and 3–5.

The department does not support this proposal because the additional 61 days would extend the hunting season into the peak of the wolf pupping season. The department believes the existing 9-month hunting season and 5-wolf bag limit provides ample opportunity to harvest wolves. Extending the season to June 30 will not significantly increase wolf harvesting opportunities.

Declines in pelt quality throughout the spring reduce pelt values, as well as interest in harvesting wolves.

Wolf populations in the unit are healthy and harvest during the later part of the season is typically low. It is anticipated that most harvest likely to occur during May and June would be by nonresidents who purchase a wolf tag, hoping for an opportunity to harvest a wolf incidental to spring black bear hunting.

PROPOSAL 14

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Clarify the boundaries of the Blind Slough Closed Area in Unit 3. This is a department housekeeping proposal.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Adopt**

RATIONALE: Staff proposal, see issue statement.

PROPOSAL 15

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would change the Unit 1C beaver trapping season opening date to November 10; the current trapping season is December 1-May 15.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Do Not Adopt**

RATIONALE: The current seasons and bag limits for beaver in Unit 1C have been in place since the 1960s. The current season dates are appropriate to ensure beaver pelts are at peak quality when harvested, and season lengths are sufficient to allow ample trapping opportunity. Prime pelts are sold for a higher dollar amount which benefits trappers and is a sound use of the resource.

We have few data on beaver populations so information about trapper harvest and the trapper survey report is our best tool in determining beaver population status. Beaver harvest varies from year to year and the present seasons and bag limits in Unit 1C have demonstrated their effectiveness over time in providing opportunity for trappers, and assuring that beaver populations remain sustainable. The department recommends retaining the December 1 season opening date as it has been for the past 40 years.

PROPOSAL 16

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would change the Unit 1D beaver trapping season to September 1 - June 30 and allow the use of firearms; the current trapping season is December 1 - May 15 and does not allow the use of firearms to harvest beaver.

Note: The original proposal asked to modify both hunting and trapping seasons for beaver in Unit 1D. The author intended to change methods and means to allow the use of firearms for taking beavers with a trapping license.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Do Not Adopt**

RATIONALE: The proponent has concerns regarding the perceived increase in beavers in the Chilkat River Valley and their impacts on salmon resources. Detailed survey and inventory data is not available for beavers in this area, but anecdotal information from sportsmen and fisheries biologist suggest beaver numbers are increasing. Per conversations with fisheries personnel, beaver numbers appear to be increasing and can have both a positive and negative impact on salmon resources. Beaver activity may block passage for returning adults and emigrating juveniles but it also creates excellent juvenile salmon rearing habitat.

There is a resource-value concern when furbearers are taken outside prime-fur periods and the use of firearms increase the possibility beaver being lost after shooting. Shooting at an animal in the water also presents a safety concern. This proposal specifically identifies beavers as being detrimental to salmon which is a departure from historical attributes (currency, clothing, food, etc.) of trapping beaver. The concerns raised by the proposal may be able to be addressed through existing regulations by working with fisheries personnel to identify problem areas and issuing permits to local trappers to lethally remove beavers from those areas. These permits may be issued to allow for the take of beavers outside established seasons, bag limits, and methods and means.

PROPOSAL 17

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would require the department to implement a state sponsored beaver control program, or implement a bounty on beavers in Unit 1D.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Take No Action**

RATIONALE: See proposal 16.

PROPOSAL 18

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would change the Unit 1C mink and weasel trapping season opening date to November 10; the current season dates are December 1 – February 15.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Do Not Adopt**

RATIONALE: The current seasons and bag limits for mink and weasel in Unit 1C have been in place since the 1982. These dates are appropriate to ensure pelts are at peak quality when

harvested, and the season lengths are sufficient to allow ample trapping opportunity. Prime pelts are sold for a higher price which benefits trappers, and is a sound use of the resource.

The present seasons and bag limits in Unit 1C have demonstrated their effectiveness over time in providing opportunity for trappers, and assuring that these furbearer populations remain viable. The department recommends leaving the December 1 season opening date intact.

PROPOSAL 19

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would change the Unit 1C river otter trapping season opening date to November 10; the current season dates are December 1 – February 15.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Do Not Adopt**

RATIONALE: The current seasons and bag limits for otter in Unit 1C have been in place since the 1982. The current season dates are appropriate to ensure otter pelts are at peak quality when harvested, and the season lengths are sufficient to allow ample trapping opportunity. Prime pelts are sold for a higher dollar amount which benefits trappers, and is a sound use of the resource.

Because we have little data on furbearer populations, trapper harvest and the trapper survey reports are the best tools in determining population status. Harvest varies from year to year, and the present seasons and bag limits in Unit 1C have demonstrated their effectiveness over time in providing opportunity for trappers, and assuring that otter populations remain sustainable. The department recommends leaving the December 1 season opening date intact as it has been since 1982.

PROPOSAL 20

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would change the Unit 1C marten trapping season opening date to November 10; the current season dates are December 1 – February 15.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Do Not Adopt**

RATIONALE: The current seasons and bag limits for marten in Unit 1C have been in place since 1982. The current season dates are appropriate to ensure marten pelts are at peak quality when harvested, and the season lengths are sufficient to allow ample trapping opportunity. Prime pelts are sold for a higher dollar amount which benefits trappers and is a sound use of the resource.

Because we have few data on furbearer populations, trapper harvest and the trapper survey report are the best tools in determining population status. Marten are particularly vulnerable to overharvest if access to all available habitats is provided through roads and trails. In the case of Unit 1C, the area along the Juneau road system is especially accessible, and beginning the season earlier than the present date could have consequences of overharvesting marten in some of these

areas. Although the harvest can vary year to year, the present seasons and bag limits in Unit 1C have demonstrated their effectiveness over time in providing opportunity for trappers, and assuring that marten populations remain sustainable. The department recommends leaving the December 1 season opening date intact as it has been since 1982.

PROPOSAL 21

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would reduce the distance that traps may be set to Juneau area trails, and would require allowed traps be elevated three feet off the ground.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Amend and Adopt**

RATIONALE: In 1987, a state regulation was adopted that closed trapping within ¼ mile of many Juneau area trails. The justification for the closure cited public safety concerns, the possibility of catching domestic pets, and the value of wildlife viewing along trails. This closure significantly reduces areas around Juneau that can be trapped. Accessible areas off the Juneau road system are fairly limited and many of those drainages have trails that restrict trapping. With many of these drainages being narrow and steep sided, getting ¼ mile from the trail is difficult and leaves very little area for trapping. Trapping is further restricted by a city ordinance that forbids setting traps or snares within ½ mile of any public or private street, road, right-of-way or highway within the City and Borough of Juneau.

As authored, this proposal would limit traps to jaw spreads of 6.25 inches or less, traps would have to be elevated at least 3 feet above the ground and traps must be at least 50 yards from the trail for all trails listed as closed in the current Alaska Trapping Regulations.

We support the concept of this proposal with the following amendments: traps must have a jaw spread of 4.5 inches or less, traps must be placed at least 5 feet above the ground, and traps must be placed at least 100 yards from a restricted trail. Other traps sets would still be allowed beyond the current ¼ mile restriction. This regulatory change still addresses the issues of public safety, protection of pets, and wildlife viewing along trails, while allowing for a practical compromise between trappers and other users of these trail systems.

PROPOSAL 22

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would add several Juneau area trails to those listed which are closed to trapping within ¼ mile of the trail.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **No Recommendation**

RATIONALE: In 1987, a state regulation was adopted that closed trapping within ¼ mile of many Juneau area trails. The justification for the closure cited public safety concerns, the possibility of catching domestic pets, and the value of wildlife viewing along trails. Since the original promulgation of the regulation, additional trails have been developed and several have

been upgraded. In April 2008, a dog was killed in a #330 Conibear trap, and another dog was caught in a small leghold trap but was released unharmed. These incidents have highlighted the concerns listed in the 1987 proposal. The current state closure is in addition to the City and Borough of Juneau ordinance (see proposal 21).

This proposal is an allocation issue among user groups using Juneau area trails. This proposal would further restrict the area available for trapping in the Juneau area. State and other agency regulations require trap marking, and prohibit trapping in certain areas. Proposal 21 may mitigate the inclusion of additional trails being closed to trapping.

PROPOSAL 23

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would prohibit the harvest of white-phased black bears by defining coloration and establishing a percentage of pelt coverage.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **No Recommendation**

RATIONALE: In August 2007 the board passed an emergency regulation prohibiting the harvest of white-colored black bears in Unit 1D in response to a bear observed in Skagway, Alaska with this coloration. Public sentiment in Skagway to protect this animal prompted this request for action. The regulation became permanent in November 2007. In June 2008 a black bear, believed to be the same bear, was harvested. An investigation following the harvest determined that the bears' pelage did not meet the regulatory requirement of a white-colored bear. The hunter was not charged and the hide and skull of the bear was returned. Many Skagway residents were appalled with the inability of this regulation to protect the bear that it was designed to protect.

The department offers no recommendation on this proposal because it is an allocation among users. The department manages black bears at a population level; light-phased black bears are still black bears and are managed as such. Identifying and offering protection to an individual animal or a specifically colored cohort of a population is an allocation decision for the board.

PROPOSAL 24

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would extend the Unit 1C spring brown bear hunting season to June 15th, and change the bag limit to 1 bear every regulatory year.

Note: The proponent intended the proposal to address the Unit 1C brown bear hunting only; Unit 4 regulations are not part of the proposal. Although the author references Unit 1C in general, his intent is to address a specific portion of Unit 1C known as Berners Bay.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Do Not Adopt**

RATIONALE: The author of this proposal recommends these changes to provide more hunting opportunity for bears by increasing the season length, and by allowing the harvest of a bear every year. He states the season in Unit 1 was set up for the ABC islands (Unit 4), which have milder weather that result in earlier den emergence for bears, and this changes their availability to hunting. This difference is already recognized in the present seasons, where much of Unit 4 closes on May 20, while the Unit 1 season extends to May 31.

During the past 3 years, a brown bear research study in the Berners Bay portion of Unit 1C has collected data on spring den emergence and habitat use by brown bears. GPS radiocollar results indicate that bears use the tidal flats and estuaries in the lower portion of the bay from mid to late May. Bears using these areas are available to hunters during the present season.

Brown bear harvest in Unit 1C is low. During the 10 year period 1998-2007, 46 bears (38M:8F) were taken. Harvest data from Berners Bay during this same 10 year period was 9 bears, with 5 of them being taken in mid to late May. The low harvest in Unit 1C is a reflection of the low bear density and a preference by many hunters to target the high bear densities of Unit 4.

The department does not support this proposal because there is adequate opportunity to harvest brown bears in Unit 1C under the present seasons and bag limits. The 1 bear every 4 years bag limit has been in place in Unit 1C since 1968, and is consistent with remainder of the region, and should remain unchanged.

PROPOSAL 25

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would close a portion of the Klehini River Drainage in Unit 1D, to the taking of brown and black bears.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **No Recommendation**

RATIONALE: The author of this proposal would like have this area closed to bear hunting as a way of preventing conflicts between the hunters and bear viewers. As indicated in the proposal a public observation areas known as Marks Park overlooks this area and is very popular for wildlife viewing. This area in question is productive bear habitat consisting of extensive salmon streams and river bars and other forage for bears. Although few bears have been harvested in this area, the author suggests that any bear hunting from this location is problematic. During the period 1998-2007, a mean harvest of 2 brown bears and 3 black bears per year were taken in the vicinity of Marks Park.

Most of Unit 1D provides both excellent wildlife viewing and hunting. Viewing sites include the Chilkoot River, and a large portion of the Chilkat River and Bald Eagle Preserve. Nearly the entire unit is open to hunting. Existing regulations already address some of the concerns of the proposal; e.g. hunters must be off a road before shooting and wounded bears count against bag limits. This proposal is an allocation issue between various users of Marks Park rather than a conservation concern.

PROPOSAL 26

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would open an archery only mountain goat hunt in the area known as the “Skagway Pie” near Skagway, Alaska.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Adopt**

RATIONALE: The area east of Dyea and the Chilkoot Trail and west of the White Pass and Yukon Railroad has been closed to mountain goat hunting since 1985 due to conservation concerns. Department management reports list include the objective of opening this area to hunting when goat numbers are at a level that will allow for harvest. Aerial survey data collected during the period 1985-2003 did not enumerate enough goats to warrant opening the area to hunting. The department wants at least 100 goats in this area to allow a hunt. An aerial survey conducted on September 24, 2008 counted 118 goats (99 adults & 19 kids), achieving the desired threshold and demonstrating acceptable recruitment of juvenile goats.

Because of the close proximity of this area to Skagway, hunting pressure might preclude any open hunt unless it is archery only. Based on the number of goats counted, the allowable harvest would be 6 points (male goats = 1 point, female goats = 2 points). A firearm hunt would require this to be a drawing permit hunt, with very few permits allowed to assure sustainability. An archery only hunt would provide unlimited hunting opportunity while still allowing for a harvest rate that is slow enough to allow the department to monitor the season and prevent overharvest.

Southeast Alaska goat hunters are required to report successful hunts within 5 days of the kill, and horn check-in is required in Unit 1D. This will allow managers the ability to monitor the harvest. Emergency Orders can be used if necessary to close the hunt. This hunt can be opened concurrently with RG024 (September 15 – November 30) when personnel are available to issue permits and check-in harvested animals.

PROPOSAL 27

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would eliminate the three antlerless moose hunts (DM043, DM044, DM045) in that portion of Unit 1C north of Icy Straits and west of Excursion Inlet known as the Gustavus hunt area.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Do Not Adopt**

RATIONALE: The antlerless moose hunt at Gustavus was first adopted in 2000 in response to the department’s concern that the moose were in danger of exceeding the winter range carrying capacity. Moose densities were 7 moose/mi² and to increase through 2003 to approximately 13 moose/mi². Density dependant effects were becoming evident in the condition of the range as well as the condition of moose using this area.

Browse studies indicated that the moose were browsing > 90% of the available willow twigs, and removing 35-40% of the available biomass. Both of these indices are extremely high when compared to other studies in Alaska. Biologists also determined through the capture of cow moose that they were very under nourished compared to moose in other populations. This low body fat content and generally poor body condition likely played a role in the depressed pregnancy and twinning rates recorded in cow moose in this area.

Antlerless hunts have lowered moose densities over the past 4 years. During this time our data indicate that cow moose using this area are becoming healthier as density declines. The rump fat index is increasing, meaning our sample of cow moose have a higher body fat than in the previous years. Productivity, measured by pregnancy rate, is increasing. Both of these factors indicate this moose herd is responding to lower densities of moose on this range, which is only possible through the implementation of the antlerless hunts.

As with all antlerless hunts, the Gustavus hunts need to be reauthorized by the board annually through a department re-authorization proposal. This allows the board to scrutinize the validity of the antlerless season on an annual basis.

PROPOSAL 28

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would change the “any bull” registration permit hunt at Gustavus to a spike-fork/50 inch/3 brow tine antler restriction registration permit hunt.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Adopt**

RATIONALE: Staff proposal, see issue statement.

PROPOSAL 29

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Extend the damaged, broken, or altered moose antler regulation in effect for Units 1B and 3 to include the entire RM038 hunt area, including that portion located within Unit 1C south of Port Hobart, including all Port Houghton drainages. This is a department housekeeping proposal.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Adopt**

RATIONALE: In 2007 the board partially repealed a region-wide regulation stating that a damaged, broken or altered antler does not satisfy the spike-fork requirement in antler restricted moose hunts unless the opposing undamaged and unaltered antler meets the specified point requirements. The Board maintained, however, that there remained sufficient evidence of abuse indicating that the broken antler regulation should be retained in the RM038 hunt area. At the time the revised regulatory language was crafted a small portion of the RM038 hunt area located in subunit 1C was inadvertently omitted from the regulatory language. As a result the broken antler regulation applies to the Unit 1B and 3 portions of the RM038 hunt area, but does not

apply to the Unit 1C portion. The department requests that the regulatory language for the damaged, broken or altered moose antler regulation be amended to include the entire RM038 hunt area including that portion located within Unit 1C south of Port Hobart, including all Port Houghton drainages.

PROPOSAL 30

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would eliminate the current Tier II scoring system used to allocate TM059 Tier II moose hunting permits, and provide for a Haines resident-only hunt that restricts hunters to one moose per family every two years.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Do Not Adopt**

RATIONALE: All Alaska residents qualify as subsistence users and are eligible to participate in Tier II hunts. TM059 permits cannot be awarded solely to Haines residents. The current Tier II scoring system provides a mechanism that awards permits to individuals who demonstrate, by application, their use of the Tier II population and subsistence activities in the hunt area. Historical permit allocation data indicates that Unit 1D residents that reside in Haines receive most TM059 permits. Unit 1D residents (Haines, Klukwan and Skagway) were awarded 88% – 94% of available permits from 2004 – 2008. Haines and Klukwan residents received nearly all of the permits, with a few (0% – 4%) being awarded to Skagway residents. Most remaining permits were awarded to Southeast Alaska residents with a few awarded to hunters in other communities. From 2004 – 2008, the number of TM059 applicants increased from 235 in 2004 to 297 in 2008. Because the number of applicants is increasing, the number of individuals who do not receive a permit is also increasing. However, Haines area residents continue receive the majority of permits.

Restricting hunters to one moose every two years appears to contradict the implied reliance on game resources for food that Tier II hunts are intended to provide. No other Tier II hunts are known to restrict game harvest to every two years.

PROPOSAL 31

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would extend the current wolf hunting season an additional 15 days to May 30th, and lengthen the trapping season 116 days by extending wolf trapping season to May 15th in Unit 1D. The current wolf hunting and trapping seasons end on April 30th.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Do Not Adopt**

RATIONALE: Total wolf harvest for Unit 1D is 46 over the last 10 years, with a mean harvest of 4.6 wolves per year. Alaska residents, primarily from Haines, harvest most of the wolves (38) in Unit 1D. Wolf harvests are typically incidental to other hunting activities although a small number of trappers target wolves.

Wolf population size in Unit 1D is unknown and anecdotal information gathered from trappers, hunters, pilots and department personnel suggest the population is stable to increasing. Unit 1 wolf hunting season dates have been adjusted by the board twice in the last six years (2002 and 2004). The current Unit 1D wolf hunting and trapping season end date of April 30th is consistent with other Southeast Alaska subunits.

The department does not support this proposal because the later spring season would include the denning and pupping period for wolves, and harvest will provide animals with poor pelt quality. Expanding the existing trapping season may result in non-target species such as bears being caught. The existing 9 month hunting season and 5 ½ month trapping season provide abundant opportunity to harvest wolves.

PROPOSAL 32

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would open the Unit 5 lynx trapping season on November 10 rather than the present December 1.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Do Not Adopt**

RATIONALE: The same proposal was submitted at the 2006 board meeting, along with two related proposals to change the fox and coyote trapping seasons from December 1 to November 10. The board adopted the fox and coyote proposals but followed the department's recommendation to keep the lynx trapping season opening date at December 1. The department's preference for the December 1 season opening was based on our understanding that lynx only reach peak fur quality in December. With the trapping being open to mid-February, the present season length provides ample opportunity to harvest lynx when their fur is most valuable.

During 1997-2007 only one lynx was caught incidentally prior to the season, so the problem identified by the author appears to be an uncommon occurrence. Therefore the department recommends leaving the lynx trapping season as it is, and keeping it synchronous with the remainder of the region.

PROPOSAL 33

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would eliminate the trap tagging requirements in Unit 5.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Take No Action**

RATIONALE: See proposal 35.

PROPOSAL 34

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Shorten the wolverine trapping season in Units 1-5 by ending the season on February 15.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Adopt**

RATIONALE: Staff proposal, see issue statement.

PROPOSAL 35

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would eliminate the trap tagging requirements in Units 1-5.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Do Not Adopt**

RATIONALE: At the 2006 Southeast Region BOG meeting, a proposal to require trap tagging in Unit 1C was submitted by a member of the public. The department recommendation was to amend the proposal to include Units 1-5, and mirror the tagging regulation that was in place for large snares. The board adopted our amended version, and the trap tagging requirement became regulation in Units 1-5.

The author of this proposal would like to see the regulation eliminated because he believes the public had no opportunity to address the amended version of the original proposal. The department understands the authors reasoning; however we believe this regulation is a valuable tool to help protect trapping opportunity. The presence of tags on traps projects to the public a level of accountability that we believe is necessary for trappers to provide. During this past trapping season, several situations arose where the trap tag allowed the Department of Public Safety – Division of Wildlife Troopers and the department to contact the trapper and address a concern in an expedient manner. This action was only possible because of the trap tagging requirement, which we believe mitigated the concerns in these cases.

The flexibility in the regulation allows trappers to use an identification system which keeps their name and address confidential. It also allows trappers the option of marking traps in a way that does not require individual traps being tagged.

PROPOSAL 36

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would eliminate the September 1 – 14 fall black bear season for non-resident hunters for game management units 1A, 1B, 1C, 2, and 3.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Adopt**

RATIONALE: Staff proposal, see issue statement.

PROPOSAL 37

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would require a registration permit for black bear hunters in game management Units 1, 2, and 3.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Take No Action**

RATIONALE: See proposal 38. The department has submitted a similar proposal (Proposal 38) that will require a harvest ticket rather than a registration permit for all black bear hunters in Units 1-5. Although a registration permit can be used for the same purpose as a harvest ticket, we generally only make them available at department offices. This makes them more difficult for hunters to obtain, and creates an additional workload. Registration permits also require mandatory reporting, and penalize hunters who do not comply. Harvest tickets can be made available at license vendors and online, making them easy for hunters to acquire. We believe harvest tickets can be designed to gather the information we need to manage black bear hunting effort.

PROPOSAL 38

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would require a harvest ticket for all black bear hunters in game management Units 1-5.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Adopt**

RATIONALE: Staff proposal, see issue statement.

PROPOSAL 39

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would require a harvest ticket for all black bear hunters in game management Units 1-3.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Take No Action**

RATIONALE: See proposal 38, which is the same as the harvest ticket requirement of this proposal, but includes all of Region I rather than just Units 1-3.

PROPOSAL 40

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would restrict black bear hunters to “archery only” methods when hunting over bait, in Units 1-5.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **No Recommendation**

RATIONALE: This is an allocation issue. The authors proposed change in methods and means is not related to a conservation issue, rather it would benefit archery hunters compared with hunters using other methods of take.

PROPOSAL 41

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Clarify the use of discretionary conditions on black bear baiting permits.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Adopt**

RATIONALE: Staff proposal, see issue statement.

PROPOSAL 42

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Modify in-person reporting requirements for obtaining bait site locations.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Take No Action**

RATIONALE: See proposal 41.

PROPOSAL 43

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would allow deer to be bartered in Unit 1.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **No Recommendation**

RATIONALE: The term “barter” is defined in statute 16.05.940 (2) as the exchange or trade of fish or game, or their parts, taken for subsistence uses, and is included in the statutory definition of subsistence uses in 16.05.940 (33). Thus “barter” is included in the broader context of patterns of customary and traditional uses, and is not a commercial activity, nor does it involve cash. However, unless specifically authorized, the barter of meat from a big game animal is prohibited by a statewide regulation (5 AAC 92.200 (b) (8)). This is in contrast to barter of fish harvested under subsistence regulations, which is not prohibited. Because the prohibition is in a statewide regulation, this regional proposal may not provide the means for the Board to evaluate this issue now, but there may be options to address this topic at a subsequent meeting. The department has very limited information at this time to evaluate the extent of customary and traditional barter of game meat taken for subsistence uses in Unit 1.

PROPOSAL 44

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Modify the antler restriction for moose in Unit 1 as follows:
A legal bull is one that possesses a spike, fork, or 5 points or more of any kind on one side of his rack. In order for a point to be legal it has to be 1” long or longer and it has to be higher than it is wide. The type of point is irrelevant.

A follow-up conversation has determined that the intent of the proponent was for Region-wide implementation of the proposed change in all moose hunts where the 3 or more brow tine and/or 50 inch spread requirements are currently in effect.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Do Not Adopt**

RATIONALE: The antler restrictions currently in place in Region I were originally developed for Alaska-Yukon moose (*Alces alces gigas*) on the Kenai Peninsula and later applied to western Canada moose (*A. a. andersoni*) inhabiting the central Southeast Alaska. Speculation has long existed that the current moose antler restrictions are overly protective when applied to the smaller *andersoni* subspecies. Unlike *gigas* moose found elsewhere in the state *andersoni* moose typically have smaller antlers that do not develop predictable configurations that correlate well with age. While the current antler restrictions do not partition the harvest among various age classes exactly as intended, they have done a good job of constraining the moose harvest to sustainable levels.

The department remains interested in fine-tuning the existing antler restrictions, particularly in hunt area RM038, in order to maximize harvest opportunity while constraining the harvest within sustainable levels. To that end, in 2004 the board established a limited number of any-bull drawing permit hunts within the RM038 hunt area to allow the department to obtain additional age and antler data from the otherwise protected segment of the bull population. After three seasons of limited any-bull harvest, the department now has sufficient data with which to make inferences about the age structure of bulls possessing a wide variety of antler configurations. Analysis of antler and age data collected in Units 1B, 3 and southern 1C indicate that the median age of bulls possessing 5-points on either antler is 4 years of age (n = 51, range 2–10). Under the current selective harvest strategy (SHS) bulls with 5 points on either antler would typically fall within an age class the current SHS is intended to protect. As currently proposed (5 points on either antler) the proposed regulation would likely overharvest younger bulls the current SHS is designed to protect.

A preliminary analysis of antler architecture in Southeast Alaska indicates that moose antler characteristics vary across the Region (i.e. moose antler architecture in subunit 1B differs from that of subunit 1D). Therefore, a region-wide approach to antler restrictions may not be appropriate. The existing antler criteria in Southeast have been in place for many years and have been successful at limiting the bull harvest to sustainable levels. While some minor fine-tuning of the existing antler criteria might be appropriate in some areas, the department does not support a wholesale change to the current antler restrictions.

Contrary to the proponent’s claim, we do not believe the recommend change would result in fewer illegal animals being harvested. Many illegal kills result from hunters mistaking 3-point antlers for

forked antlers and it is highly likely that hunters will similarly mistake 4-point antlers for 5-point antlers. The problem of distinguishing legal points from non-qualifying antler projections will not be eliminated as a result of the proposed change and therefore is unlikely to significantly reduce the number of sublegal bulls being harvested.

PROPOSAL 45

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would extend the wolf hunting season in Units 1 and 2 to May 31. Presently the Unit 1 hunting season is August 1 - April 30, and Unit 2 is December 1 - March 31.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Do Not Adopt**

RATIONALE: The department disagrees with the intent of this proposal. The author suggests aligning the wolf hunting season ending dates for Units 1 and 2. However, the department manages these areas with differing spring season lengths based on the differing circumstances regarding these populations.

The unit 1 season ends on April 30 which is consistent with the remainder of the region. This season ending date coincides with the denning season for wolves, as well as the time of year when pelt quality declines considerably from the winter months. In Unit 2, the hunting season ends on March 31. This earlier ending date was adopted to address concerns about overharvesting this wolf population that is extremely vulnerable due to its habitat being intersected with an exhaustive network of logging roads. Also, in the mid-1990s Unit 2 wolves were determined to be a separate subspecies and consideration was given to listing them under the Endangered Species Act. Although this didn't occur, a harvest cap of no more than 25% of the estimated population of wolves per year was adopted at the 1996 board meeting. This approach addresses conservation concerns and does not jeopardize this genetically distinct population, while allowing for a sustainable harvest.

Although the present seasons do not extend into May as the author desires, they do span 9 and 4 months for Units 1 and 2 respectively. The department recommends the season ending dates remain the same.

PROPOSAL 46

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would shorten the wolf hunting seasons in Units 1, 3, 4 and 5 by 60 days. This change would be implemented by changing the starting date from August 1 to September 1, and changing the season ending date from April 30 to March 31.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **Do Not Adopt**

RATIONALE: The department recommends leaving the dates for the wolf hunting season unchanged. Wolf populations in Units 1, 3, and 5 are widely distributed and considered healthy and stable. Wolves occur rarely, if at all, in Unit 4. There is no indication that the wolf

populations in these areas are being negatively impacted by the present season. Shortening the fall season would take away opportunity from early season hunters who might want to harvest a wolf while deer or mountain goat hunting. The April wolf hunting season allows early season bear hunters a chance to harvest a wolf should they encounter one. Given that there is no conservation concern, the department doesn't believe shortening the season is necessary.

The author suggests that the 2004 BOG decision to lengthen the wolf season by 60 days resulted in a season that is excessively long, and unwarranted. However, the BOG change in 2004 was enacted to reinstate the wolf hunting season that was in place since 1992, but was shortened by 60 days at the 2002 BOG meeting.

PROPOSAL 47

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would change the dates of the waterfowl hunting season in the Southeast Alaska Zone (Units 1–4) from September 1 – December 16 to begin in early October and end in mid-January.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **No Recommendation**

RATIONALE: The submission of this proposal, and similar proposals in previous years, indicate that some hunters prefer a change in the waterfowl hunting season dates to later in the year. Other waterfowl hunters have expressed opposition to a later season. A shift in season dates represents a tradeoff between harvest opportunity of September migrants (e.g., wigeon, pintail, and teal) versus wintering waterfowl (e.g., resident mallards and sea ducks).

In anticipation of a proposal again this year the department conducted a survey of resident waterfowl hunters in Southeast to determine their preferences for season dates and split seasons. Results show a pattern of preference for an earlier season in the northern portion of the region and later season in southern portions. Across the entire region hunters indicated a majority preference for some shift to later season dates than currently exist. Few (about 25%) waterfowl hunters preferred a split hunting season as a means to address hunting preferences to accommodate both early and late hunting.

The current U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service framework for the waterfowl season limit the season to a maximum of 107 consecutive days and the entire zone must use the same starting and ending dates. Proposals for split seasons or to subdivide the zone are only entertained by the USFWS every 5 years; the next proposal cycle will be in 2011. A proposal for two zones would need sufficient justification demonstrating that the two areas differ sufficiently in geography, climate, and bird migration to warrant different season dates.

PROPOSAL 48

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would ban the use of .223 caliber full metal jacketed bullets for the taking of big game in Units 1, 2, 3 and 4.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: **No Recommendation**

RATIONALE: The department agrees with the author that wounding loss is something we should be concerned with, but we don't believe that this proposal is necessary to accomplish that objective. Wounding loss is a concern in Southeast Alaska where targeted species can escape quickly into thick forested habitats if ammunition doesn't have sufficient shock power. We use hunter education as an outreach tool to emphasize the need to achieve proficiency in the use of their firearms and to take only safe and effective shots at their target. Hunters must also be aware of the capability of their firearm and the choice of bullets they use, determined by the species of big game they are hunting. These principles are all important, and apply to any firearm regardless of the caliber or of the ammunition being used.
