

Note: Proposal 160 was accepted by the Board of Game as an Agenda Change Request for consideration at the Arctic/Western Region meeting scheduled for January 2017.

PROPOSAL 160 - 5 AAC 85.045. Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose. Extend the moose season in Unit 18, Kuskokwim Area to September 30 as follows:

Game Management Unit 18 - Kuskokwim Area

Resident Open Season: September 1 – September [10] **30**.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Current regulatory hunt period for RM615 is limited to ten days only, resulting in lost opportunity and failure to meet harvestable surplus goals due to mixture of state and federal land management status in portions of Game Management Unit 18 with high bull/cow ratios (80:100 in some areas) that could be targeted to provide and sustain significantly higher harvest levels.

Within certain tributaries of the Kuskokwim in Unit 18 bull/cow ratios are extremely high – over 80:100 in some areas. The federal season window in this area is September 1-30, and in 2016 the dates of September 1 – 15 were implemented. Due to the large amount of state managed lands along and within the riparian corridors however, these moose – comprised of the same subpopulations – are essentially inaccessible in many cases. Additionally, the whole patchwork issue of state or federal lands creates an entirely unnecessary, unjustified, and burdensome situation for subsistence hunters.

In 2016, despite having a 15 day season and very favorable high water conditions, only about half of the minimum federal quota of 90 moose were taken (the federal refuge staff biologist estimated 110 as their 2016 quota sustainable for 30:100 bull/cow ratios). Having concurrent seasons within this lands management patchwork could allow for the combining, and increase, of both state and federal quotas; allowing extension of the season and expansion of the harvest in the targeted tributary areas referenced above. With this 30 day window, managers could then identify recognizable geographical boundaries that would allow certain tributaries to remain open longer for additional harvest, while the mainstem Kuskokwim could be closed when harvest in that section was deemed sufficient within sustained yield conservation standards.

Implementing this regulation would also greatly simplify matters for managers and hunters alike, as they would not have to wonder or worry whether they were on state or federally managed lands.

This effect of this registration hunt regarding reduced hunting and harvest effort on tributary moose populations in Unit 18 was entirely unforeseen when the current regulation was adopted. It remained unanticipated and unforeseen by users and management alike. The informative data reflecting the magnitude of the situation was simply and essentially non-existent or available until late into and following the 2016 fall hunt; 5+ months past the Arctic/Western region's April 2016 proposal decline. With the continued increase in the Unit 18 moose populations most of the Kuskokwim harvest now occurs along the main river corridor, and eastern tributary populations remain comparatively "unhunted" due to that easier access along the main stem, lower and westerly/tundra tributaries.

If the problem is not solved, forty-fifty (or more) surplus moose a year will continue to go unharvested. Integration of state/federal hunt actions for shared/mutual goals will remain as much or more confusing for subsistence users, and highly cumbersome for managers. The situation as it is now “foreseen”, will only amplify, with expectation to persist, until additional opportunity is accommodated and a resulting increase in harvest for these areas is achieved.

PROPOSED BY: Orutsararmiut Native Council

(HQ-2016-ACR 12)
