

Alaska Board of Game  
South Central Region Meeting  
March 15 – 19, 2013

RC 19

Game Management Proposal Comments – David Phillips

*My name is David Phillips and I've lived, hunted and worked in the Kenai/Nikiski area for the past 22 years. I'm a Past President of the Alaska Kenai Peninsula Chapter of SCI and currently sit on the Board of Directors for that organization. I'd like to thank the Alaska Board of Game for this opportunity to express my opinions on the following proposals.*

**PROPOSAL NO. 143**

**DESCRIPTION:** Modify bag limit for moose to 50" or greater, 3 brow tines in Units 7 and 15.

I oppose Proposal #143 due to the reasons I give in support of Proposal # 144.

**PROPOSAL NO. 144**

**DESCRIPTION:** Retain the current moose harvest regulations for Units 7 and 15 through 2014.

I support Proposal #144 because I believe that there is no reasonable excuse for not following through with the original adopted timeframe for these harvest regulations. I credit the change to the harvest regulations eliminating the taking of spike moose for the fact that I've seen more young bulls in the past year on this peninsula than I've seen in the previous 21 years of living here. Taking young spike bulls when they're still hanging around with cows and making them easy targets for hunters in accessible areas, does nothing for increasing mature bull populations at a time when there are almost no mature bulls left to hunt in those areas. I firmly believe that giving them the ability to grow up would help provide the hunters in this area an increased opportunity to harvest mature bulls in the near future.

One of the ADF&G goals in addition to their Constitutional directive of managing wildlife for maximum sustainable yield is to manage harvests to improve product quality. That's why you have full curl harvest regulations on sheep and why you have size requirements on moose in most GMU's in the state. I feel that the present moose harvest regulations on the Kenai Peninsula will accomplish that goal, even given the low moose population in this area. In addition, wildlife viewers and Peninsula visitors may actually yet get to see and photograph mature bull moose in the near future instead of just cows.

**PROPOSAL NO. 147**

**DESCRIPTION:** Suspend aerial taking of wolves in Unit 15A and modify the population and harvest objectives for moose.

I oppose the suspension of aerial taking of wolves in Unit 15A. Unfortunately, this regulation is not presently in effect. I understand the issue with the lack of available habitat in this unit, but believe that without significant predator control efforts, the moose population won't be able to increase to meet even the low moose population target established for this unit.

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I believe that even if there were significant improvement in habitat, the moose population will not increase until you are able to increase the survival rate of moose by decreasing the predation on both calves and mature animals. Unfortunately, the KNWR does not appear to be interested in meeting, or even trying to meet their established goals for habitat improvement. They claim that controlled fires are not a viable method of habitat improvement due to the population and structures around those units and crushing foliage as a habitat improvement method is too expensive. The reality is that the Alaska Chapter of Safari Club International has proposed and offered to utilize the Alaska Moose Federation's crusher and large dozer to crush foliage on the refuge at no expense to the KNWR. Unfortunately they were not interested and turned that offer down. The fact that the KNWR controls most of Unit 15A moose habitat, makes predator control much more important in trying to just maintain the present moose population in Unit 15A, much less increase it. I honestly believe that their management philosophy on moose in the KNWR is that no moose would solve a number of their problems, and they can focus on birding tours and small mammals rather than the complex moose, predator and habitat issues they now ignore.

Alaska Statute AS 16.05.255(j) (2)(4)(5) - Intensive Management Law defines intensive management as "management of an identified big game prey population consistent with sustained yield through active management measures to enhance, extend, and develop the population to maintain high levels or provide for higher levels of human harvest, including control of predation and prescribed or planned use of fire and other habitat improvement techniques."

Unfortunately, neither the predator control or habitat improvement requirements in this statute are presently being met in Unit 15A to help increase the moose population.

**PROPOSAL NO. 151**

**DESCRIPTION:** Re-institute closure of Palmer Creek/Lower Resurrection Creek areas in Unit 7 to moose hunting.

I oppose Proposal # 151 because I believe that it's an attempt to reduce hunting opportunities on Palmer Creek Road by residents of Hope that do not want hunters in the area. The Chugach National Forest supports hunting in this large low population area and there is no basis for eliminating the public hunting opportunities based on a few Hope resident's perceived conflicts or anti-hunting sentiments.

**PROPOSAL NO. 153**

**DESCRIPTION:** Modify the registration season dates and the bag limit for brown bear in Unit 15A and 15C.

I support Proposal #153 based on the fact that the Kenai Brown Bears in these units make up an under utilized resource. When comparing the recently completed KNWR Brown Bear study and the target bear population numbers determined by the ADF&G, there are a large number of

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surplus bears identified in these areas. Based on these numbers, I feel that there is no reason to change the present registration season and bag limit to a draw hunt anyplace on the Peninsula just to appease the anti-hunting sentiment of the Federal Land Managers. Since the majority of land available for hunting is within the refuge boundaries, and by limiting the hunting opportunities by a draw hunt in those areas, I feel that you will be under utilizing an important and abundant resource.

Draw permits severely limit harvest opportunities on Brown Bear because they are typically taken as incidental kills with a draw permit rather than stalk and shoot. One of the main reasons for this is the lack of access on the KNWR. Registration hunts allow for greater opportunity for taking brown bears in these units since there are a greater number of permits in the field, allowing a greater number of incidental kills. This becomes apparent when looking at the number of bears taken during the last registration hunt vs. the draw permit hunt success percentages in the past. I feel that the continued registration hunt rather than adopting another draw permit hunt regulation would help meet the maximum sustained yield mandate for wildlife management of the moose in this area, based on the identification of both a large brown bear population and the significant bear predation on moose calves in these units.

**PROPOSAL NO. 159**

**DESCRIPTION:** Open wolf, coyote and lynx hunting in Skilak Loop.

I support Proposal #159 to allow predator hunting in the Skilak Lake Loop Special Management Area from November 10-March 31<sup>st</sup>, this proposal would implement an important management strategy presently ignored. The KNWR continues to take the position, in alignment with anti-hunting organizations, that wildlife viewing is their management goal over hunting and active wildlife management. Managing for maximum sustained yield not only allows hunting opportunities, but also provides the visiting tourist with the maximum numbers of wildlife of all types available for viewing, photographing, worshipping, or whatever. The more moose there are, the more bears, wolves and coyotes there typically are. Unfortunately, once the predators have over utilized their food source, they will move to greener pastures and those wildlife viewing opportunities will be lost for years in the future. I don't feel that predator hunting in the Skilak Loop area November 10<sup>th</sup> through March 31<sup>st</sup> would conflict with any other Winter activity since the only people I've ever witnessed using the area in the winter months are cross country skiers on the roads.

**PROPOSAL NO. 160**

**DESCRIPTION:** Open a no closed hunting season for wolf in Units 7 and 15.

**DISCUSSION:** I support proposal #160 since bears and wolves are the only abundant large animals on this Peninsula and predation of both moose and caribou can only be reduced by controlling those predator populations. The taking of wolves by a hunter as an incidental kill during summer months would still make it a highly sought after animal by that hunter regardless

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of the condition of the pelt, and could help reduce the population. The pelts are not prime for the fur market any time of year and trappers do not put a lot of effort into wolves on the Peninsula. For that reason, they are another over abundant, under utilized resource that needs to be actively managed. The reality is that most of the land in these units is controlled by the KNWR and predator control opportunities in these units are severely limited due to KNWR policies and lack of access. I feel that allowing hunting of wolves year round in these areas would help meet that objective.

*Again, I would like to thank the Alaska Board of Game for allowing me to express my opinions on these proposals.*



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