



Department of Fish and Game

DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
Headquarters

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An Agenda Change Request (ACR 7) has been submitted by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to the Alaska Board of Game requesting to change 5 AAC 85.045(a)(18) Hunting seasons and bag limit for moose. The proponent is asking the board to consider opening an antlerless moose hunt in a portion of Unit 20E.

With respect to the board's Agenda Change Request (ACR) acceptance criteria (5 AAC 92.005):

- A. The department is unaware of any error in regulation.
- B. The department is unaware of any effects of regulations that were unforeseen when the regulation was adopted.
- C. There is a biological concern that is caused by existing regulations.
- D. The department is unaware of any unforeseen or unexpected events that would otherwise restrict or reduce a reasonable opportunity for customary and traditional wildlife uses as defined in AS 16.05.258(f).
- E. There is an unexpected resource situation that would cause a biologically allowable resource harvest to be precluded by delayed regulatory action.

There is currently no antlerless hunt in this area. Current bull moose hunts that overlap with the proposed antlerless hunt area include a fall resident and non-resident bull hunt (RM865) and a winter resident-only draw hunt (DM796; overlaps with only a portion of the proposed hunt area).

The specific proposed antlerless hunt has not been discussed at any previous board meetings. The potential for an antlerless hunt in the area was briefly discussed at the March 2020 meeting as a possible way to increase harvest opportunity should the population allow it. There is a positive customary and traditional use finding for moose in Unit 20E, with an amount reasonably necessary for subsistence of 50–75 moose.

The moose population within a portion of southern Unit 20E has shown consistent growth since 2005 and has approximately doubled since then, with the cow component of the population growing at a significantly faster rate than the bull component of the population. Limited antlerless harvest would: 1) slow population growth to avoid habitat damage while ensuring long-term sustainability of the population and the increased yield it is currently capable of supporting, 2) help achieve IM harvest objectives, and 3) provide the management flexibility to rapidly respond to changes in nutrition.

Moose densities within a 1,821 mi² area along the Taylor Highway in southern Unit 20E increased from 0.68 moose/ sq. mi. in 2005 to 1.36 moose/ sq. mi. in 2020, with an estimated annual growth rate of 4.9%.

An antlerless hunt in this area could provide additional subsistence opportunity, help slow population growth with the goal to prevent the population from reaching or exceeding carrying capacity, and would provide management flexibility to rapidly respond to changes in nutrition.

The next regularly scheduled board meeting for Unit 20 regulations is during winter/spring of 2023/2024. If the board accepts this ACR, the department recommends the proposal come before the board at its March 2022 meeting in Fairbanks to allow for more public input.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ryan Scott".

Ryan Scott
Assistant Director
Division of Wildlife Conservation