

McGrath Area Proposals

PROPOSAL 74 - 5 AAC 85.045. Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose. Change the antler restrictions for resident moose hunting in Unit 19B as follows:

5 AAC 85.045. Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

...

19(B) Aniak River Drainage

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 bull with spike-fork	Sept. 1—Sept. 20
50 inch antlers or	
antlers with <u>3</u> [4] or	
more brow tines on	
one side	

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The regulation would change the number of brow tines required under the current regulations in Unit 19B from four to three on at least on side within the Upper Holitna-Hoholitna Management Area for resident hunters. There is no biological data that are prohibitive of changing the regulation.

PROPOSED BY: Central Kuskokwim Fish and Game Advisory Committee (EG-F16-090)

PROPOSAL 75 - 5 AAC 92.124(b). Intensive Management Plans VIII. Reauthorize the predation control program in Unit 21E as follows:

(a) **Plans established.** Intensive management plans for the following areas are established in this section:

...

(b) Unit 21(E) Predation Control Area is entirely deleted and replaced by the following.

...

(b) Unit 21(E) Predation Control Area. The Unit 21(E) Predation Control Area is established in Unit 21(E), encompassing approximately 7,993 square miles; this predation control program does not apply within National Park Service or National Wildlife Refuge lands unless approved by the federal agencies; notwithstanding any other provision in this title, and based on the following information contained in this section, the commissioner or the commissioner's designee may conduct a wolf and black bear and brown bear population reduction or a wolf and black bear and brown bear population regulation program in Unit 21(E) to benefit moose:

(1) the following Wolf and Bear Control Focus Areas are established in the Unit 21(E) Predation Control Area; the areas do not delineate a moose, wolf, or bear population and are not intended to distinguish animals within the areas from populations in Unit 21(E); the purpose is to focus wolf and bear control in a

relatively small area where moose numbers can be better estimated, where moose are accessible to hunters, and where harvest can be closely monitored;

(A) the Wolf Control Focus Area (WCFA) encompasses approximately 4,126 square miles within Unit 21(E) within the area south of 63° 06.00' N. lat., north of 61° 54.00' N. lat., and easterly of a line starting at 62° 08.00' N. lat., 160° 35.00' W. long., then north to 62° 44.00' N. lat., 160° 35.00' W. long., then east to 62° 44.00' N. lat., 160° 10.00' W. long., then north to 62° 56.00' N. lat., 160° 10.00' W. long., then east to 62° 56.00' N. lat., 160° 05.00' W. long., then north to 63° 00.00' N. lat., 160° 05.00' W. long., then east to 63° 00.00' N. lat., 160° 00.00' W. long., then north to 63° 02.00' N. lat., 160° 00.00' W. long., then east to 62° 02.00' N. lat., 159° 55.00' W. long., then north to 63° 06.00' N. lat., 159° 55.00' W. long.; wolf control will be conducted only within the WCFA; the department has the discretion to adjust the area's size and shape to include up to approximately 4,500 square miles of Unit 21(E);

(B) the Black Bear and Brown Bear Control Focus Area (BCFA) encompasses approximately 556 square miles consisting of those portions of the Yukon River drainage within the area starting at 62° 08.00' N. lat., 159° 25.00' W. long., then west to 62° 08.00' N. lat., 159° 45.00' W. long., then north to 62° 14.00' N. lat., 159° 45.00' W. long., then west to 62° 14.00' N. lat., 160° 00.00' W. long., then north to 62° 22.00' N. lat., 160° 00.00' W. long., then west to 62° 22.00' N. lat., 160° 05.00' W. long., then north to 62° 28.00' N. lat., 160° 05.00' W. long., then west to 62° 28.00' N. lat., 160° 10.00' W. long., then north to 62° 36.00' N. lat., 160° 10.00' W. long., then east to 62° 36.00' N. lat., 159° 30.00' W. long., then south to 62° 16.00' N. lat., 159° 30.00' W. long., then east to 62° 16.00' N. lat., 159° 25.00' W. long., then south to 62° 08.00' N. lat., 159° 25.00' W. long.; bear control will be conducted only within the BCFA; the department has the discretion to adjust the area's size and shape up to approximately 800 square miles of Unit 21(E); the BCFA is entirely within the WCFA;

(2) this is a continuing control program that was first authorized by the board in 2010 for wolf control; it is currently designed to increase moose numbers and harvest in the WCFA and BCFA by reducing predation on moose and is expected to make a contribution to achieving the intensive management (IM) objectives in Unit 21(E);

(3) moose, wolf, black bear, and brown bear objectives are as follows:

(A) the moose IM population objective established by the board for Unit 21(E) is 9,000–11,000 moose; the IM harvest objective for Unit 21(E) is 550–1,100 moose annually;

(B) the density objective for moose in the WCFA is 1.0 per square mile (corrected for sightability) during late winter surveys; the annual moose harvest objective for the WCFA is 165;

(C) the wolf control objective in the WCFA is to reduce wolf numbers by at least 60–80 percent; the pre-control estimate within the WCFA is 80 wolves; the pre-control wolf population in Unit 21(E) is estimated at 150; a minimum of 30 wolves post-control in Unit 21(E) will ensure that wolves persist in Unit 21(E);

(D) the black bear control objective in the BCFA is to reduce black bear numbers to the lowest level possible; the pre-control black bear population in Unit 21(E) is estimated at 1,900–2,275; the pre-control estimate within the BCFA is 130–160; because the BCFA is a relatively small geographic area, removing black bears from within it will have only a minor effect on the black bear population in Unit 21(E);

(E) the brown bear control objective in the BCFA is to reduce brown bear numbers to the lowest level possible; the pre-control brown bear population in Unit 21(E) is estimated at 100–200; the pre-control estimate within the BCFA is 10–15; because the BCFA is a relatively small geographic area, removing brown bears from within it will have only a minor effect on the brown bear population in Unit 21(E);

(4) board findings concerning populations and human use are as follows:

(A) A proactive approach is needed to allow for a timely response to a decline in the Unit 21(E) moose population if IM population and harvest objectives have not been met.

(B) predation by wolves and bears is an important cause of failure to achieve population and harvest objectives;

(C) a reduction of wolf and bear predation within the WCFA and BCFA can reasonably be expected to make progress towards achieving the Unit 21(E) IM objectives;

(D) reducing predation is likely to be effective and feasible using recognized and prudent active management techniques and based on scientific information;

(E) reducing predation is likely to be effective given land ownership patterns;

(5) if the moose density in Unit 21(E) declines to fewer than 1.0 moose per square mile (corrected for sightability) then authorized methods and means are as follows:

(A) hunting and trapping of wolves and hunting of black bears and brown bears by the public in Unit 21(E) during the term of this program may occur as provided in the hunting and trapping regulations set out elsewhere in this title, including use of motorized vehicles;

(B) notwithstanding any other provisions in this title, the commissioner may allow department employees to conduct aerial, land and shoot, or ground based lethal removal of wolves and black bears and brown bears using state owned, privately owned, or chartered equipment, including helicopters, under AS 16.05.783;

(C) notwithstanding any other provisions in this title, the commissioner may issue public aerial shooting permits and/or public land and shoot permits using fixed-wing aircraft as a method of wolf removal under AS 16.05.783;

(6) time frame is as follows:

(A) through June 30, 2026, the commissioner may authorize removal of wolves and black bears and brown bears in Unit 21(E);

(B) annually, upon implementation of predation control, the department shall, to the extent practicable, provide to the board a report of program activities conducted during the preceding 12 months, including implementation activities, the status of the moose, wolf and bear populations, and recommendations for changes, if necessary to achieve the objectives of the plan;

(7) the commissioner will review, modify or suspend program activities as follows:

(A) when wolf surveys or accumulated information from department personnel, hunters, trappers, and permittees indicate the need to avoid reducing wolf numbers in Unit 21(E) below 30 wolves;

(B) when the moose density and harvest objectives within the WCFA specified in this subsection are achieved.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Residents of Unit 21E; the Grayling, Anvik, Shageluk, Holy Cross Advisory Committee (GASH AC); and other hunters who use the area expressed concern about a perceived decline in the moose population during the mid-1990s. To address this concern, in January 2005, the Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) established a citizen-based working group. The working group asked to review all available information and to develop a comprehensive moose management plan for the area. The final product was the Yukon–Innoko Moose Management Plan, which includes the following mission statement: “Maintain healthy and abundant moose populations by proactively managing moose, predation, and habitat, and keeping moose harvest within sustained yield so that subsistence needs for moose are met on an annual basis, and there is sufficient moose to provide for personal and family use by Alaska residents and some nonresident hunting opportunity for generations to come.” This plan was endorsed by both the Board of Game (board) and the Federal Subsistence Board.

Because proactive management was a major tenet of the plan, the working group recommended an aerial wolf control program to prevent further declines in moose densities and maintain hunting opportunities in Unit 21E. The board adopted an intensive management (IM) plan (5 AAC 92.124)

in March 2010 authorizing wolf control if the moose population declined below 1.0 moose/mi². The most recent survey in 2016 estimated a density of 2.0 moose/mi² corrected for sightability, and there is no reason to initiate wolf control at this time.

The Unit 21E IM plan expired on June 30, 2016. The program was first authorized to include wolf control only; however, a bear control program is being added as a potential option based on information collected in adjacent Unit 19A and Unit 19D, which indicated that predation control for bears in addition to wolf control is feasible and would be more effective than wolf control alone. This proposal is meant to be proactive and will allow a more rapid response if a declining moose density is detected.

This proposal reauthorizes the Unit 21E IM plan for a nine-year period from July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2026 and will simplify codified language. It includes options for aerial wolf control conducted by public permittees and ADF&G, and aerial black and brown bear control conducted by ADF&G only. Additional details are available in the companion IM operational plan.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F16-136)

PROPOSAL 76 - 5 AAC 85.045. Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose. Lengthen the hunting season for moose in Unit 21E as follows:

Unit 21E

Resident Hunters

One antlered bull by registration permit only

Sept. 1 [SEPT. 5]—Sept. 25

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? We would like to see the moose season changed in Unit 21E. Currently the federal season in Unit 21E starts on August 25 and requires a green harvest card. The resident state hunt starts on September 5 and requires a registration permit. This is leading to a lot of confusion of the users of this resource and double reporting. We would like to move to align these seasons and reporting requirements, and our first step is to request that the Board of Game move the moose season in Unit 21E from September 5 to September 1. We believe that the moose population will not be negatively impacted with the additional four days of hunting and it will be the first step to aligning the confusing state and federal seasons. We don't feel comfortable currently with aligning the state season with the earlier start date of August 25 and feel that a start date of September 1 is preferable at this time.

The GASH Advisory Committee will be submitting a proposal to the Federal Subsistence Board requesting a season change from August 25 to September 1 as well as requesting that the reporting requirements align with the state and move from a harvest ticket to the registration hunt at the first available call for game proposals.

PROPOSED BY: Grayling, Anvik, Shageluk, and Holy Cross Fish and Game Advisory Committee (EG-F16-042)

PROPOSAL 77 - 5 AAC 85.020. Hunting seasons and bag limit for brown bear. Increase the bag limit for brown bear in Unit 21E as follows:

Unit 21E
Resident Hunters
2 [1] bears every regulatory year

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? We would like to see a two brown bear limit in Unit 21E. There is an overabundance of this resource in our subunit, and it is our belief that more residents would take advantage of utilizing this resource if they were able to sell the skulls and hides of brown bears. This would benefit both the residents of our area by the potential to bring some money into our communities as well as to increase the take of brown bears that also prey on the same game animals we depend on as well. In the long term there is the chance that having residents take more brown bears will keep Unit 21E from having to resort to instituting the intensive management program that is written into the Innoko Moose Management Plan by helping to potentially increase moose survival in this unit.

PROPOSED BY: Grayling, Anvik, Shageluk, and Holy Cross Fish and Game Advisory Committee (EG-F16-041)

PROPOSAL 78 - 5 AAC 85.020. Hunting seasons and bag limits for brown bear. Lengthen the hunting season for brown bear in Unit 19C as follows:

Change opening date to August 10 from September 1. New regulation to read: Unit 19C brown/grizzly bear, one bear per regulatory year, August 10—May 31.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Unit 19C. Change the brown/grizzly bear hunting season to coincide with the remainder of Unit 19 opening August 10.

Why? To allow for additional bear hunting opportunity during the early season. All surrounding units are open during August. I see no reason not to allow for bear hunting opportunity during the early season in Unit 19C as well.

PROPOSED BY: Jeff Pralle (EG-F16-033)

PROPOSAL 79 - 5 AAC 92.044. Permit for hunting bear with the use of bait or scent lures. Allow the harvest of brown bear at bear bait stations in Unit 19A as follows:

(1) a person may establish a black bear bait station, or a black and brown bear bait station in Units 7, 11, 12, 13, 14(B), 15, 16, 19(A), 20(A), 20(B), 20(C), 20(E), 21(D), 24(C), 24(D), and 25(D), only if that person obtains a permit under this section;

...

(13) in Units 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14(A), 14(B), 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26(B), and 26(C), a hunter who has been airborne may take or assist in taking a black bear at a bait station with the use of bait or scent lures under a permit issued by the department, and if the hunter is at least 300 feet from the airplane at the time of taking; in Units 7, 11, 12, 13, 14(B), 15, 16, 19(A), 20(A), 20(B), 20(C), 20(E), 21(D), 24(C), 24(D), and 25(D), a hunter who has been airborne may take

or assist in taking a brown bear at a bait station with the use of bait or scent lures under a permit issued by the department, and if the hunter is at least 300 feet from the airplane at the time of taking.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? In recent years within Unit 19A we have seen brown bears more frequently at black bear stations. Unit 19A is a predator control unit. We would like to see allowing residents the opportunity to harvest a brown bear over a registered black bear bait station.

- 1) Customary Use
- 2) Safety Reasons

PROPOSED BY: Central Kuskokwim Fish and Game Advisory Committee (EG-F16-091)

PROPOSAL 80 - 5 AAC 92.540(7)(B). Controlled Use Areas. Remove the restriction on boat horsepower in the Holitna-Hoholitna Controlled Use Area in Unit 19A as follows:

No motor restrictions for the Holitna-Hoholitna Controlled Use Area.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Get rid of the 40 horsepower restriction for the Holitna-Hoholitna Controlled Use Area. Make it so you can take one boat to haul everything which will cost less for gas. The restriction keeps people from hunting the area.

PROPOSED BY: Tim Crace (HQ-C15-900)

PROPOSAL 81 - 5 AAC 92.540(7)(a)(ii). Controlled use areas. Specify airports allowed for transporting moose hunters within the Upper Kuskokwim Controlled Use Area as follows:

If this proposal were adopted, 5 AAC 92.540(7)(a)(ii) would read, "... the area is closed to the use of aircraft for hunting moose, including the transportation of moose hunters, their hunting gear, or parts of moose; however, this provision does not apply to the transportation of moose hunters, their hunting gear, or parts of moose by aircraft between publicly owned airports **including Takotna, McGrath, Medfra, and Nikolai**, or the transportation into the area of game meat that has been processed for human consumption."

Listing permitted airports within the Upper Kuskokwim Controlled Use Area (UKCUA) removes ambiguity, retains the original status for access in Medfra, and most importantly, is consistent with the intent of the regulation to separate boat-borne hunters from hunters using aircraft. This proposal is the simplest way to provide regulatory clarity.

Note: A map submitted with the proposal is available on the meeting information website for the Interior/Northeast Arctic Region meeting at:

www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=gameboard.meetinginfo&date=02-17-2017&meeting=fairbanks

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The UKCUA was established in 1981, and was amended in 2001 and 2008. Its purpose is to separate hunters using aircraft from

those using boats by prohibiting aircraft to transport moose hunters and gear within its boundaries. However, it allows access within the UKCUA through publicly owned airports. The Medfra Airport (MDR) is within the boundaries of the UKCUA and is publicly owned (Bureau of Land Management), but no longer appears in the Alaska Supplement so it no longer fits the definition of an airport. Meanwhile, MDR has 2200 feet of runway, runway numbers are 02/20, Airport ID is 13228, the Airport Sequence ID is 1322801, and Airport Identifier is MDR (established in 1950 through 2014). For all practical purposes, MDR is in fact, a public airport.

Medfra itself was permanently occupied through 2003 (by the proposer and his extended family) and is still used seasonally. It has legal right of way access from the river to the airport, is shown as a village site in the hunting regulations booklet, and is a village option for Tier II permit applications. When the UKCUA was first considered, MDR was legal for hunter access, and decisions outside the Board of Game process to remove it from the Alaska Supplement have changed its status. People with ties to Medfra regularly access their property for multiple purposes through this airport.

MDR is publicly owned and fits most definitions of an airport. Like surrounding villages, Medfra is generally accessed by air through its airport but because it's no longer in the supplement, using Medfra's airport sets up moose hunters for an inadvertent violation. If nothing is done, the uncertainty will persist and Medfra property owners will be unable to use moose hunting gear brought into Medfra by air.

This proposal would benefit all hunters and agencies from unambiguous regulations and this housekeeping proposal achieves clarity. The UKCUA was adopted to address conflicts between boat borne hunters and those using aircraft, specifically float planes. Hunters using aircraft to access Medfra, most specifically those with homes and cabins in Medfra, benefit by being able to continue to hunt from their property without having to worry which hunting gear was brought in using planes. Once in Medfra, all hunters typically use boats to hunt moose so the interest in separating boat-borne hunters from aircraft hunters is still maintained if the amended language is adopted. Those who would oppose the proposal are those who fear that confirming access would bring unwanted competition. However, because there is no nonresident moose hunt accessible from Medfra and there are resident permit hunt restrictions, competition is muted.

For other options, we considered resurrecting previous language that limited the time frame when the restriction on aircraft would be in effect (e.g., "during the moose hunting season"). While helpful this would still not provide the clarity this proposal seeks to achieve.

This housekeeping proposal would clarify existing regulations, retain previous board decisions, and retain access to MDR within the UKCUA without complicating the definition of airports. No real changes are expected on the ground from this housekeeping proposal; its benefit is to provide clarity and retain the status that MDR had when the UKCUA was first established.

PROPOSED BY: Barney Anselment (EG-F16-021)

PROPOSAL 82 - 5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep. Change the nonresident sheep season in Unit 19C to a drawing permit hunt with up to 80 permits as follows:

5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep.

...

19(C)

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS

1 ram with full-curl horn

by drawing permit only;

up to 80 permits may

be issued

Aug. 10—Sept. 20

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The McGrath Advisory Committee is concerned with the ability of resident hunters to access and successfully harvest Dall sheep in Unit 19C. This unit is unique in Alaska because the majority of the sheep hunters are nonresidents. The average number of nonresident sheep hunters over the last five years is 84 and about 59 sheep are taken. For residents there are on average 67 hunters per year and 22 sheep are taken per year. These numbers clearly show in Unit 19C more than half of the hunters are nonresidents and 73% of the sheep shot each year are shot by nonresidents. In addition to having more nonresident hunters, access for residents is also made more difficult by the fact that guides are placing camps along many airstrips in the unit weeks before the season even starts.

While a guide concession program would have addressed most our concerns, we do not believe that this will occur in the near future. This proposal does not seek to limit guided use, but only to cap it by using a permit system. While it seems imbalanced that residents don't even get to harvest half of the sheep, we propose issuing up to 80 nonresident permits. This will keep nonresident participation approximately where it currently is and allow for better management of our sheep resource.

PROPOSED BY: Ray Collins

(EG-F16-093)

Note: This proposal is scheduled for the Arctic/Western Region meeting as proposal 25 and the Interior/Northeast Arctic Region meeting as proposal 83.

PROPOSAL 83 - 5 AAC 85.025. Hunting seasons and bag limits for caribou. Open a nonresident draw hunt for caribou in Units 18 and 19 as follows:

Units 18, 19A, and 19B - Nonresidents:

One bull caribou by drawing permit September 1-30

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? As of the drafting of this proposal, ADF&G states: "The harvest of Mulchatna caribou is well below sustainable levels." The Mulchatna caribou herd has started to grow and all indicators are that it is healthy. Unfortunately, it has recently resided predominantly in areas that are difficult to access. A nonresident hunt, limited by drawing should be well within the sustainability of this herd that is

currently underutilized. I would suggest a limit of up to 50 tags and ask ADF&G to initially only issue 20 across the entire range of the herd. It is desirable to see this herd continue to grow. Communities within the region have had a difficult time taking the harvestable surplus due to the locations of the animals. Providing a nonresident hunt will result in light harvest and most meat will be left in the communities within the region as is the case in all remote nonresident hunting opportunities. This proposal is submitted for both the Arctic and Western (Unit 18) and the Interior and Eastern Arctic (Unit 19A & B) meetings. This proposal will also be submitted for Units 9 and 17 when in cycle.

PROPOSED BY: Aaron Bloomquist

(EG-F16-010)
