

PROPOSAL 33

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

Modify hunting seasons and require a registration permit for moose hunting in Unit 22D
Remainder as follows:

5 AAC 85.045. Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose. (a) ...

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
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(20)

Remainder of Unit 22(D)

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

Aug. 10 – Sept. 14

1 bull moose **by registration permit only**; only antlered bull moose may be taken from Dec 1-Jan 31;

Dec. 1[Oct 1] – Jan. 31,
(To be announced)

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

No open season

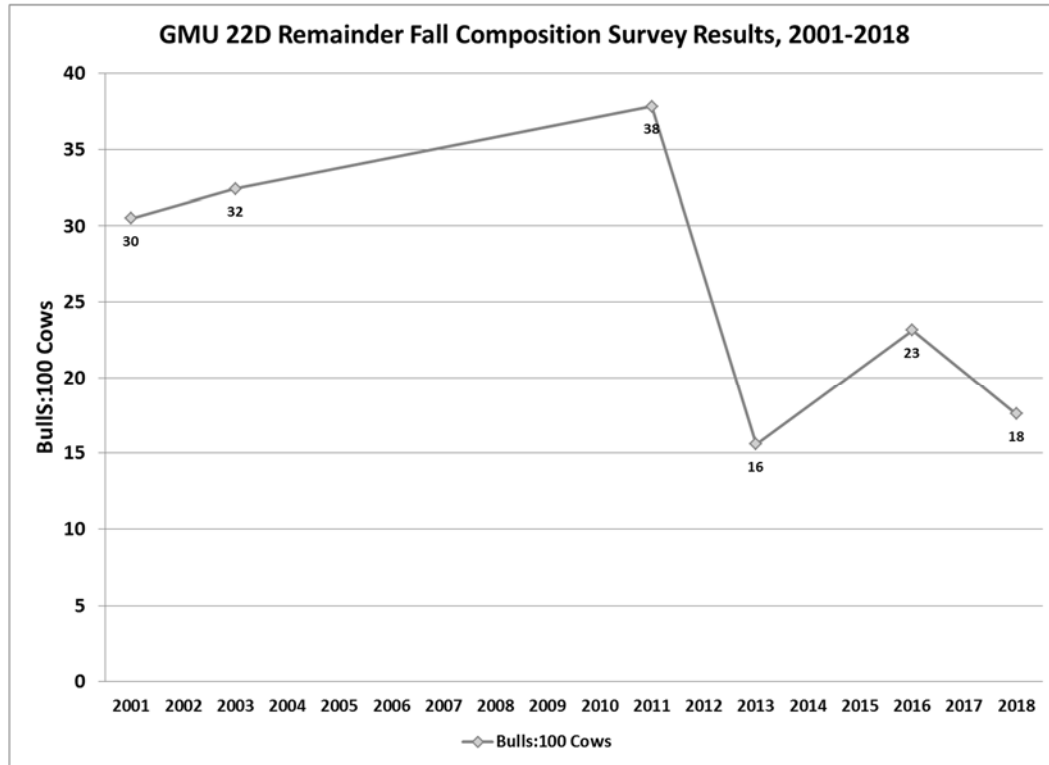
What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Moose abundance in Unit 22D has persisted at low density since dramatic declines in abundance occurred throughout Unit 22 in the late 80's and early 90's. Moose abundance in Unit 22D Remainder was last surveyed in 2014 at which time the population was estimated at 491 moose (95% CI: 410-571) with 18% recruitment. This represents a 14% annual rate of decline 2011 – 2014. The Department of Fish and Game unsuccessfully attempted to complete a moose survey during the spring of 2018, but plans to attempt another abundance survey in the area during the spring of 2020. A spring recruitment survey completed in 2018 observed 977 moose and found 11% recruitment throughout Unit 22D suggesting that the population of moose has not continued to decline 13% annually however recruitment in the area is low.

Fall composition surveys completed in the area 2001 – 2018 indicate that the bull:cow ratio has declined to below our management objective of 30 bull:100 cows. Surveys completed 2013 to present have consistently resulted in bull:cow ratio estimates below 30 bull:100 cows. A survey completed in 2018 found 18 bulls:100 cows (Figure 1). Declines in the bull:cow ratio suggest that the current level of harvest is not sustainable and that management action should be taken to reduce harvest in the area.

The Unit 22D Remainder hunt area is remote and not immediately accessible along the Nome road system. Such challenges have historically limited hunter participation and harvest in the area, as a consequence liberal seasons and bag limits persisted in the area. Elsewhere in Unit

22, registration permit hunts with harvest quotas (RM840) have been implemented in hunt areas immediately accessible along the Nome road system in order to maintain harvest at sustainable levels.

Figure 1. Unit 22D Remainder Fall Composition Survey Results, 2001 – 2018



Hunter participation in Unit 22D Remainder has steadily grown 2000 – 2018. Hunters seeking to take advantage of more liberal moose seasons coupled with advances in the capabilities of off-road vehicles have likely reduced some of the challenges associated with hunting in the area and facilitated the increase in hunter participation.

Reported harvest during RY2017 and preliminary estimates of reported harvest during RY2018 were 34 and 33 bulls respectively. Compared to the long-term average annual reported harvest 2001 – 2016 of 20 bulls per year this information indicates harvest in the area is increasing. Reported harvest should be considered a minimum estimate of harvest as a portion of the moose harvested from Unit 22D Remainder is not reported to the department. Household subsistence surveys completed by the subsistence division in the communities of Teller and Brevig Mission 1988 – 2016 suggest an average harvest of 15 and 5 moose respectively. Conversely, average annual reported harvest from residents of Teller and Brevig Mission for the period 2006 – 2017 is <1 moose and 1 – 2 moose, respectively.

The proposed regulatory changes would improve harvest reporting in the area as well as provide the department the tools necessary to maintain harvest in the area at sustainable levels. Changes to the season dates eliminate the opportunity to hunt moose in Unit 22D Remainder during the month of October and November. Given the status of the population and the observed declines in the bull:cow ratios, providing protections for breeding bulls as well as reducing hunter disturbance

during the rut is necessary to ensure future productivity.

A series of small incremental changes have been enacted by the Board of Game in response to declines in abundance and poor productivity. In 2014, antlerless moose hunts in the area were eliminated. In 2017, nonresident hunting was closed. Additional steps are warranted at this time to address biological concerns. The department has considered only making changes to the season dates in the area. Although such changes may reduce the reported harvest in the area, such measures are considered inadequate since they will not improve harvest reporting within the area and do not provide the department with the tools necessary to prevent over harvest.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

(HQ-F19-148)
