

PROPOSAL 38

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

Modify the hunting season and bag limit for moose in Unit 22A 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)

Unit 22(A), that portion in the Unalakleet River drainage and all drainages flowing into Norton Sound north of the Golsovia River drainage and south of the Tagoomenik and Shaktoolik River drainages

1 [ANTLERED] bull by registration permit only; or 1 antlered bull by registration permit only; during the period Dec 1-[Dec 31], <u>Jan 31</u> , a season may be announced by emergency order	Sept. 1 – Sept.[20] <u>30</u> Dec. 1 –[Dec 31] <u>Jan. 31</u> (Season to be announced)	No Open Season
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What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Changing the season dates for moose in Unit 22A would provide the Department of Fish and Game the flexibility to administer registration permit hunts RM841 and RM844 during the full range of season dates adopted by the Alaska Board of Game without the need to extend the season by emergency order.

The department began administering registration permits RM841 and RM844 during RY2008 following a closure to moose hunting in the area RY2005-RY2007. A season extension was issued annually RY2011-RY2015 to allow permit holders to harvest the remaining harvest quota during the fall season. In 2017, The Board of Game changed the season dates for RM841 from Sept 1-Sept 14 to Sept 1-Sept 20 in order to align the hunting regulations with the season dates historically provided through season extensions. These season dates have historically been sufficient to meet the harvest quota.

In the spring of 2017, the department completed a spring GSPE moose survey within the RM841 hunt area which resulted in a moose abundance estimate of 840 moose (90% CI: 747-933). These results indicated that the population had grown 9% annually over the period 2012-2017. As a result, the harvest quota for RY2017 was increased to 34 antlered bull moose.

At the conclusion of the fall hunt on Sept 20, 2017 the total reported harvest in the RM841 hunt was 27 moose. The department denied requests to extend the season during the fall season and issued an emergency order to open the winter hunt, RM844, with a harvest quota of seven antlered bull moose. The department subsequently issued a season extension January 9, 2018 to extend the winter hunt through January 31, 2018 after 0 moose were harvested during the December season. No moose were harvested during the RY2017 RM844 hunt and the season closed on January 31, 2018.

During RY2018 the harvest quota for RM841 was again set at 34 antlered bull moose. At the conclusion of the fall hunt on September 20, 2018 the reported harvest was 24 antlered bull moose. The department received a request from the Native Village of Unalakleet to extend the season to September 30, 2018. A written petition signed by RM841 permit holders was also received which conveyed a preference for fall hunting opportunity over that provided in the winter hunt, RM844.

On September 21, 2018 the department issued an emergency order to extend the season from September 21-September 30. The season subsequently closed on September 30 with a total reported harvest of 35 antlered bull moose.

The events of RY2017 and RY2018 seem to indicate that the current season dates in regulation do not provide adequate opportunity for permit holders to harvest the available quota. Harvest during either season may be strongly influenced by weather, animal movements, travel conditions, as well as other subsistence and commercial activities in the area. As a result the department would like to extend both seasons to cover the full range of season dates historically provided for through season extensions; provide additional administrative flexibility in hunt management; and eliminate the need to issue season extensions in the future.

If adopted, the department does not anticipate the extended season will create a conservation concern. Both the fall and winter hunts are administered as registration permit hunts and managed with harvest quotas. Successful hunters are required to report their harvest to the department within two days of the kill resulting in timely harvest information, and the department has the authority to issue an emergency order closure.

The department does not have any biological justification for administering RM841 with an antlered bull bag limit. The number of antlered bulls is theoretically equal to the number of bulls within the hunt area during the fall season. As a result, applying an antlered bull bag limit during the fall hunt does not have any management implications. Changing the bag limit in the RM841 hunt to one bull would allow permit holders to harvest moose under proxy hunting regulations.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F19-159)
