

PROPOSAL 258

5 AAC 85.045(a)(19). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

Reauthorize a winter any-moose season during March in a portion of Unit 21D.

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
(19)		
...		
Unit 21(D), that portion south of the South bank of the Yukon River, downstream of the up-river entrance of Kala Slough and west of Kala Creek		
RESIDENT HUNTERS:		
...		
1 moose, by registration permit only, up to 15 days during March; a person may not take a cow accompanied by a calf	(Season to be announced)	
...		

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Antlerless moose hunting seasons must be reauthorized annually. The goal is to provide additional harvest opportunity and meet harvest objectives. This harvest opportunity of antlerless moose recently emerged because the moose population in the Kaiyuh Flats is increasing rapidly, especially the number of cows in the population. This reauthorization will likely improve or maintain hunting opportunity. If this antlerless moose hunt is not reauthorized, opportunity to utilize a harvestable surplus of cow moose would be lost, and our ability to meet Intensive Management (IM) harvest objectives could be reduced. In addition, rather than allow the population to go through dramatic rates of expansion and contraction, we believe it is necessary to slow the rate of increase.

The IM harvest objective for Unit 21D is 450–1,000 moose. The 10-year average estimated harvest during 2010–2019 was 408 moose, which includes the reported and estimated unreported harvest. The annual estimated harvest has not met the harvest objective since 2003 when the estimated harvest was 489 moose. Additional harvest from this hunt will help make progress toward achieving the IM harvest objectives without reducing bull-to-cow ratios to low levels. Subsistence hunters will benefit from the opportunity to harvest cow moose.

Analysis of three Trend Count Areas, Squirrel Creek, Pilot Mountain, and Kaiyuh Slough, within the Kaiyuh Flats in this hunt area showed a significant increase in moose abundance among all age classes, and adult moose abundance increased 57% above the 16-year average by 2017. Geospatial Population Estimate data also showed a statistically significant increase from 1,897 ($\pm 11\%$) moose in 2011 to 4,116 ($\pm 10\%$) moose in 2017. Moose twinning data for the hunt area also showed high and stable twinning rates since 2004.

The portion of Unit 21D affected by this reauthorization is approximately 21% (2,559 mi²) of Unit 21D (12,093.6 mi²). Moose abundance in this area was estimated at 4,000–4,500 moose, which is approximately 39–44% of the total moose estimated in Unit 21D. At 10,305 moose ($\pm 1,546$) in 2017, the mid-point for the total Unit 21D moose population estimate was above the IM population objective for all of Unit 21D (12,093.6 mi²) of 9,000–10,000 moose.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F21-034)
