

## FINDINGS OF THE BOARD OF GAME

## Noatak Controlled Use Area in Game Management Unit 23

During the publicly convened Board of Game (BOG) meeting in November 1994, the BOG voted to reconsider previous action taken in March 1994 when the Noatak Controlled Use Area (CUA) was enlarged. Reconsideration occurred during the public BOG meeting in March 1995. The BOG heard public and advisory committee testimony, and staff reports. Based on testimony and reports, and after due consideration, the BOG finds that:

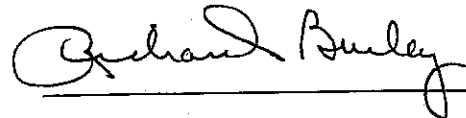
1. The Noatak CUA was enlarged primarily to resolve a significant conflict between hunters who use aircraft for access and local hunters who use boats during late August and early September along the Noatak River. Conflict occurs when low altitude flights by aircraft-borne hunters disturb wildlife and disrupt hunting activities of those using boats. Conflict also occurs when hunters transported by aircraft occupy the best camping and hunting locations along the River, thereby preventing local residents from using traditional hunting sites;
2. Along with recent restrictions in moose seasons and bag limits, the Noatak CUA was originally proposed to help reduce harvests on a declining moose population. Moose densities in the area have significantly declined in recent years, and the number of non local resident and non resident moose hunters have significantly increased. However, as amended and passed by the BOG in March 1994, the effect of the CUA on the harvest of moose in the Noatak River drainage is unclear;
3. The Noatak CUA was enlarged to maintain a reasonable opportunity for subsistence hunters using boats within the River corridor without unduly restricting hunters using aircraft. Access by aircraft-borne moose and caribou hunters in the Noatak River drainage remains available throughout the hunting season on tributary rivers adjacent to the CUA, on the Noatak River above the CUA, and in the CUA before 25 August and after 15 September. In addition, hunters who traditionally have relied on aircraft to access the CUA area can continue to do so while it is in effect by using a registered guide who operates throughout the fall with boats and ATV's in the CUA, by accompanying local residents who access the CUA by boat, or by floating into the CUA and arranging to be picked up by aircraft after 15 September. The Western Arctic Caribou Herd is also available to aircraft-borne hunters throughout the year in numerous areas outside of the CUA in Game Management Unit 23 and elsewhere in Northwest Alaska;

4. The enlarged Noatak CUA has existed for only 1 year, which is inadequate time to evaluate its effectiveness in reducing user conflicts and moose harvests. In addition, extremely high water levels during fall 1994 confounded the effects of the CUA on hunter access and harvest levels both in and outside of the CUA in Game Management Unit 23;

5. No compelling reason to rescind the regulation has been presented;

6. Accordingly, the BOG voted to not rescind the existing regulation establishing the Noatak CUA.

Adopted March 21, 1995



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Richard Burley, Chair  
Alaska Board of Game