

PROPOSAL 157

5 AAC 85.045(a)(16). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

Reauthorize the resident antlerless moose season in Unit 18 as follows:

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
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(16)

Unit 18 Kuskokwim Area, that portion easterly of a line from the mouth of the Ishkowiik River to the closest point of Dall Lake then to east bank of the Johnson River at its entrance into Nunavakanukakslak Lake (60 59.41' N. latitude, 162 22.14' W. longitude), continuing upriver along a line one-half mile south and east of, and paralleling a line along the southerly bank of the Johnson River to the confluence of the east bank of Crooked Creek, then continuing upriver along the east bank of Crooked Creek to the outlet at Arhymot lake, then following the south bank of Arhymont Lake easterly to the Unit 18 border and north of and including the Eek River drainage

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

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1 antlerless moose by drawing permit only, up to 100 permits may be issued

Sept. 1-Oct. 15

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Unit 18, that portion that drains into Kuskokwim Bay south of the Carter Bay drainage

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

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1 moose by registration permit only; to be announced by emergency order

Dec. 1—Mar. 31
(Season to be announced)

No open season.

Remainder of Unit 18

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

3 moose; of which only 1 may be an antlered bull; a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf; or

Aug. 1—Sept. 30

3 antlerless moose; or

Oct. 1—Nov. 30

3 moose

Dec. 1—April 30

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 antlerless moose

Dec. 1— Mar. 15

...

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? To be retained, the antlerless moose seasons in Unit 18 must be reauthorized annually. The current antlerless hunts in the Remainder of Unit 18 were adopted at the January 2014 Board of Game meeting in Kotzebue. The current antlerless hunt in the Goodnews Hunt area and nonresident antlerless hunt was adopted at the January 2017 board meeting in Bethel. The Kuskokwim hunt was adopted at the January 2024 board meeting in Kotzebue. Both the Remainder and Goodnews antlerless hunts were amended at the board meeting in Nome in 2020 . The board has previously reauthorized the antlerless moose season for resident hunts in Unit 18 remainder for regulatory year (RY) 2016 through RY2023. This proposal requests reauthorization for RY2024.

Implementation of antlerless hunts began in 2007 and has continued each year due to increased moose abundance, productivity, and population growth along the Yukon River drainage in Unit 18. Based on the steady growth in moose populations and productivity, ADF&G proposes continued antlerless moose hunts in the Remainder of Unit 18.

Within the areas near the Yukon River, the moose population is estimated at a minimum of 24,000 animals with calf:cow ratios ranging from 36:100 to 61:100, and twinning rates from 15% to 50% for all areas. Population growth and range expansion continues in this portion of Unit 18. The population is expected to continue to grow with high recruitment and adult survival.

Current year harvest data in the Remainder of Unit 18 has not been finalized; harvest is expected to be similar to the past 4 years and well below sustained yield for this robust population. Allowing antlerless harvest will benefit hunters through increased opportunity, and any increases in harvest may help slow the growth rate of the population in this portion of Unit 18. The nonresident antlerless moose hunt has had very low participation. Harvest has been three antlerless moose (all cows) in the past 5 years.

The moose population in the Goodnews River drainage has grown steadily in the past 15 years following a closure in 2004. The fall hunt had a quota of 10 in the first few years of the hunt and recently increased to 45. The season has not been closed by executive order in that time, and for the past few years the quota has not been met. In the seven years that the winter hunt has been held, harvest has been low (with a range of 0-6 animals). The March of 2024 survey observed 450 moose and based on the steady growth in moose populations and productivity, ADF&G proposes continued antlerless moose hunts in the Goodnews River Drainage.

In January of 2024 at the board meeting in Kotzebue, the board adopted a drawing hunt for antlerless moose on the Kuskokwim River. The first hunt is anticipated to be held in the fall of 2025. In February of 2024 the midpoint of the population estimate was 3,336 moose in Zone 1 of the Kuskokwim hunt area. In the same month, the department counted an additional 2,327 moose in a minimum count of Zone 2 of the hunt area. Following a moratorium, the Kuskokwim moose population has experienced rapid growth and range expansion and is starting to see early signs of resource limitation and high browse removal rates.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F24-057)
