

PROPOSAL 162

5 AAC 85.045(a)(18). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

Reauthorize the antlerless moose seasons in Unit 20E as follows:

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
(18) ...		
Unit 20(E), remaining portion of the Ladue River Controlled Use Area		
RESIDENT HUNTERS:		
...		
1 antlerless moose by drawing permit only; by youth hunt only; up to 100 permits may be issued in combination with the nonresident drawing hunt; a person may not take a cow accompanied by a calf; or	Aug. 5–Sept. 5 Oct. 15–Nov. 30	
1 antlerless moose by drawing permit only; up to 400 permits may be issued; a person may not take a cow accompanied by a calf	Oct. 15–Nov. 30	
NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:		
...		
1 antlerless moose by drawing permit only; by youth hunt only; up to 100 permits may be issued in combination with the nonresident drawing hunt; a person may		Aug. 5–Sept. 5 Oct. 15–Nov. 30

not take a cow accompanied
by a calf

Unit 20(E), that portion outside of
the Ladue River Controlled Use
draining into 1) the Ladue River
upstream of the South Fork of the
Ladue River, 2) the Dennison Fork of
the Fortymile River, and 3) the
Mosquito Fork of the Fortymile River
drainage.

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

...

1 antlerless moose by
drawing permit only; by youth
hunt only; up to 100 permits
may be issued in combination
with the nonresident drawing
hunt; a person may
not take a cow accompanied
by a calf; or

Aug. 5–Sept. 5
Oct. 15–Nov. 30

1 antlerless moose by
drawing permit only; up
to 400 permits may be issued;
a person may not take a cow
accompanied by a calf

Oct. 15–Nov. 30

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

...

1 antlerless moose by
drawing permit only; by youth
hunt only; up to 100 permits
may be issued in combination
with the nonresident drawing
hunt; a person may
not take a cow accompanied
by a calf

Aug. 5–Sept. 5
Oct. 15–Nov. 30

...

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Antlerless moose hunting seasons must be reauthorized annually. The Unit 20E antlerless moose hunts were originally adopted by the Board of Game in March 2022 as a proactive management tool with the primary goals to 1) slow population growth to avoid habitat damage, 2) help achieve intensive management (IM) harvest objectives, and 3) provide the management flexibility to rapidly respond to changes in nutrition.

Current Unit 20E moose harvest is below IM harvest objectives; therefore, antlerless harvest, if enacted, would help achieve IM harvest objectives without reducing bull:cow ratios below management objectives. The Unit 20E IM harvest objective is 250–450 moose, and the RY19–RY23 annual average unit wide reported harvest was 191 moose.

The decision framework to initiate antlerless harvest in Unit 20E includes population trend, bull:cow ratios, and nutritional indices. The moose population within a 1,821 mi² area along the Taylor Highway in southern Unit 20E approximately doubled from 0.7 moose/mi² in 2005 to 1.4 moose/mi² in 2018, but declined to 0.9 moose/mi² by 2023 following several severe winters. Bull:cow ratio estimates in southern Unit 20E are currently stable and above the minimum management objectives. Finally, nutritional indices show that the moose population is currently at healthy nutritional levels. Twinning rates are healthy at 34% (2021–2023, 3-year weighted average). The department closely monitors these rates given the potential for them to lag as an indicator of population-level nutritional condition. Additionally, the estimated browse removal rate in spring 2022 was 28%, which is below the rate observed in nutritionally stressed populations.

Given the current stable population trend and bull:cow ratios and healthy nutritional indices, the department does not plan to enact antlerless hunts during regulatory year (RY) 25 but would like to retain the hunts as a proactive management tool. The Unit 20E antlerless harvest framework provides management flexibility to rapidly respond to potential future changes in nutrition and the ability to proactively reduce population growth rates, if necessary, to maintain the current high nutritional levels.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish & Game (HQ-F24-054)
