

PROPOSAL 88

5 AAC 92.034. Permit to take game and use game for cultural purposes.

Add wood bison to the list of game species allowed to be taken for cultural purposes under a permit issued by the Department of Fish and Game as follows:

The commissioner may issue a permit for the taking, and use within this state, of game for the teaching and preservation of historic or traditional Alaskan cultural practices, knowledge, and values, only under the terms of a permit issued by the department upon application. A permit may not be issued if the taking of the game can be reasonably accommodated under existing regulations. For purposes of this section, "game" includes

- (1) deer;
- (2) moose;
- (3) caribou;
- (4) black bear;
- (5) mountain goat;
- (6) small game;
- (7) furbearers;
- (8) any migratory bird for which a federal permit has been issued; and
- (9) musk oxen in Unit 18;

(10) wood bison

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? On April 2, 2024, the Commissioner announced that ADF&G will reintroduce wood bison to the Minto Flats State Game Refuge in summer of 2024. In the announcement, the commissioner articulates the desire of the state to continue developing ways in which residents of local communities might be involved in the bison restoration project. As articulated in ADF&G's Spring 2023 news release, "This restoration isn't just about ecological conservation; it's about enhancing the cultural, economic, and social fabric of our state, enriching the lives of its people and communities."

A regulatory response is needed to protect Alaskan cultural practices, knowledge, and values. In regions where bison's cultural significance now exists predominantly in story form, such as Fort Yukon, testimonies shed light on ancestral knowledge that has simply not been practiced for over a generation now, but tradition still exists. Despite historical disruptions like boarding schools and cultural loss, the resurgence of wood bison offers a tangible opportunity for reconnection and revitalization.

In other communities such as Minto, Nenana, and Manley surrounding the Lower Tanana lands in which the new herd is to be released, less oral tradition exists and any ceremonial or cultural practices that Tribes once engaged in is minimal. However, Alaska Native values are based around

adaptivity - adaptivity to the seasons, the land, changes to the environment and ecosystem, and abundance of the landscape. Cultural traditions are based on what the land provides and relationship to species or resources. As the environment and resources of the land, management decisions, and climate to evolve, so will Alaskan cultural practices and knowledge. Regulation must evolve at the same rate.

This proposal embraces the adaptive nature of Alaska Native values, and recognizes the evolving landscape of ceremonial practices. Including regulatory language, empowers Tribes and communities to preserve traditions using both established and newly introduced species in ceremonies and practices. Adding “wood bison” to 5AAC 92.034 honors Alaskan cultural practices and knowledge. It upholds honoring Alaska Native traditions, revitalizing cultural practices, and fostering a deeper connection to our shared heritage. The inclusion of wood bison represents the profound cultural and educational opportunities that Wood Bison present for the transference of both new and ancestral knowledge and skills.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local fish and game advisory committee? This proposal was developed by the Minto-Nenana Fish and Game Advisory Committee with involvement from Tanana- Rampart-Manly Advisory Committee members and ADF&G staff.

PROPOSED BY: Minto-Nenana Fish and Game Advisory Committee and Tanana Chiefs Conference (HQ-F24-044)
