ACR #5 – Establish an open season for emperor geese in 2027-2028.

SUBMITTED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

CITE THE REGULATION THAT WILL BE CHANGED IF THIS ACR IS HEARD.

5 AAC 85.065(a)(4)(G) Hunting seasons and bag limits for small game: Migratory game birds: Emperor geese

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM YOU WOULD LIKE THE BOARD TO ADDRESS? STATE IN DETAIL THE NATURE OF THE CURRENT PROBLEM.

Federal hunting regulations for migratory game birds are established annually by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in consultation with state wildlife agencies. Alaska State hunting regulations for migratory game birds may be more restrictive than federal regulations, but never more liberal. For emperor geese, federal hunting regulations follow guidelines specified in a harvest strategy from the Pacific Flyway Council's (PFC) management plan. The harvest strategy uses a population index from a breeding pair survey conducted annually by the USFWS in the year before the regulatory year to assess population status relative to prescribed regulatory thresholds. In 2024 and 2025, population status fell below a threshold that was consistent with a closed season prescription; thus, federal and state regulations closed the hunting season for emperor geese in the 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 general seasons. In summer 2026, population status improved to above the same threshold, and therefore, was consistent with an open season for emperor geese in 2027-2028 but under a restrictive regulations package that allows a 250-bird quota allotted to the State of Alaska administered by registration permit. Accordingly, federal regulations were adjusted to authorize an open season with the restrictive quota for emperor geese in 2027-2028. This ACR asks the board to align state regulations with this recent change to federal regulations which requires the Board to reopen the emperor goose hunt in the 2027-2028 season in regulation. In addition, the PFC harvest strategy was recently revised to include changes in the prescribed federal bird quotas; if the Board authorizes an open hunting season, it should also reallocate quotas across the hunt-areas to guide the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (Department) administration of the permit hunt. The Board was responsible for the initial allocation of the federal bird quota across emperor goose hunt-areas in the state (c. 2017).

WHAT SOLUTION DO YOU PREFER?

5AAC 85.065(a)(4)(G) Units 8, 9. 10, 17, 18, 22, 23 Resident Hunters: 1 goose by registration permit only; Nonresident Hunters: 1 goose by drawing permit only; up to 25 permits may be issued.

STATE IN DETAIL HOW THIS ACR MEETS THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:

To correct an error in regulation.

N/A

To correct an effect of a regulation that was unforeseen when a regulation was adopted.

N/A

Does the request identify a biological concern for the population or a threat to meeting objectives for the population?

N/A

Does the request identify an unforeseen, unexpected event or effect that would otherwise restrict or reduce a reasonable opportunity for customary and traditional wildlife uses, as defined in AS 16.05.258(f)?

N/A

Does the request identify an unforeseen, unexpected resource situation where a biologically allowable resource harvest would be precluded by delayed regulatory action and such delay would be significantly burdensome because the resource would be unavailable in the future?

Yes. If the board does not act prior to the regularly scheduled meetings a biologically allowable resource harvest will be precluded.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF THIS PROBLEM IS NOT SOLVED PRIOR TO THE REGULAR CYCLE?

Federal regulations authorize an open season for emperor geese in 2027-2028 with a quota of 250 geese by registration permit. Under state regulations, the 2027-2028 emperor goose season will remain closed, and the quota of 250 emperor geese allotted to the State of Alaska through federal regulation will remain unfulfilled and hunting opportunities afforded to hunters in Alaska will be forfeited. 5AAC 85.065(a)(4)(G) applies to multiple Units in multiple Regions; thus, Board consideration of changes to the regulation are best suited for a statewide board meeting, next scheduled in 2028 after the 2027-2028 hunting season.

STATE WHY YOUR ACR IS NOT PREDOMINANTLY ALLOCATIVE.

This ACR is not predominately allocative due to necessary preceding authorization by the Board to reopen the emperor goose hunt for the 2027-2028 hunting season under state regulations, aligning with parallel federal authorization.

IF THIS REQUEST IS ALLOCATIVE, STATE THE NEW INFORMATION THAT COMPELS THE BOARD TO CONSIDER AN ALLOCATIVE PROPOSAL OUTSIDE OF THE REGULAR CYCLE.

Secondary to reopening the hunt for the 2027-2028 season, this request is allocative across hunt areas. The Pacific Flyway Council Management Plan for Emperor Geese was recently revised with changes to the harvest strategy that includes a reduced federal quota of emperor geese allotted to the State of Alaska from 1,000 to 500 in a Standard regulations package and from 500 to 250 in a Restrictive regulations package. In 2017, the board allocated the federal quota across newly established hunt-

areas. The above-mentioned change to the federal quota in the harvest strategy will necessitate reallocation of the new quotas across hunt-areas by the board prior to the 2027-2028 season if an open hunting season is authorized in state regulations.

STATE YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE ISSUE THAT IS THE SUBJECT OF THIS ACR.

Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

STATE WHETHER THIS ACR HAS BEEN CONSIDERED BEFORE, EITHER AS A PROPOSAL OR AS AN ACR, AND IF SO, DURING WHICH BOARD OF GAME MEETING.

This ACR has not been considered before.