

Thor Stacey
PO Box 211232
Auke Bay, AK 99821

RE: Proposal 206

On behalf of the Alaska Professional Hunters Association (APHA) I'm submitting this information to urge reconsideration of Board action on Proposal 206. Board action to amend and pass Prop. 206 resulted in increasing bear hunting opportunity in GMU 9D & E, the two subunits of GMU 9 with the most bear conservation concerns. The APHA respectfully makes this request with the hope that the board can more fully discuss conservation concerns with bears in GMU's 9D & E as well as the public process that occurred in Dillingham that led to actions to shorten bear hunting seasons to reduce bear harvest.

Background:

Bear hunting seasons and bag limits were stable and effective for many years leading up to season reductions in 2018. However, harvest data (department data and presentation from Dillingham meeting attached) begin to show concerning trends that resulted in serious consideration by long time hunting guides. Ultimately the guides agreed data aligned with their observations and supported shortened seasons to reduce harvest. See attached letter or "RC50" included in this RC.

Public Process:

The Board of Game process is best venue for the public to come together to work towards resource conservation and allocation compromise. The APHA has actively worked to provide a voice for hunting guides where necessary conservation efforts must be made to either increase or decrease harvests sustainably. During the Dillingham meeting the APHA took a lead role to provide a conduit for communication between hunting guides whose livelihoods depend on wildlife conservation and fair, legally defensible allocations. As APHA's representative I am proud of the work that we accomplished in Dillingham to generate support for reduced bear hunting seasons aligning our position to assist the department address their concerns. These compromises are never easy but when they are made based on trust and when held to they increase trust. I'm certain there will be a need to work together again, perhaps in a different region or on a different species.

The APHA and our members have honored the conservation concerns and board process to approach harvest conservatively and we have not, nor are we now, asking for additions nonresident harvest in GMU 9D & E. We are in agreement that bears appear to be doing better but we still do not have the data to support increased harvest broadly at this time.

Hunter Effort Vs. Resource Abundance:

Some discussion was given during board discussions on a reduced amount of hunter effort in GMU 9D & E. Hunter effort is documented to be directly correlated to resource abundance. This data has been presented to the board during presentations on deer populations and hunter effort on Kodiak. It is highly likely that hunter participation declines are because the bear population and thus bear hunting is not quite as good as it used to be, hence the need for careful management of harvest moving forward. Prop 206 could and will likely have the result of giving the perception that bear populations are once again high in GMU 9 D & E and distort the relationship between hunter participation and resource abundance thus compounding conservation concerns. Board action on Prop. 206 focused hunter effort in the portion of GMU 9 with conservation concerns a decision inverse to achieving conservation objectives.

Summary:

The APHA is asking that Prop. 206 be brought up again to more fully consider conservation impacts to the bear population in GMU 9D & E. We are not asking for any amendment that would increase nonresident opportunity, thus harvest. We are asking for a better record that considers information presented to the board in Dillingham. We are not suggesting that the Board's hands are tied by the work it did with the public in Dillingham, however we are making the point that this work did occur and it was based on trust that there would at least be some record of those efforts moving forward. Regardless of whether or not the Board chooses to honor this request, APHA is ready to work collaboratively, on behalf of hunting guides, with this Board at this meeting and in future meetings to achieve necessary conservation objectives.

Respectfully,

Thor Stacey

RC052

To: Members of the Alaska Board of Game

RC 050 -

RE: Proposal 133

Thank you for listening to my oral testimony so carefully and asking such pertinent questions. I was compelled to leave the meeting yesterday to attend to critical business on the home front. It is very unsettling to not be present in the room at the meeting when so much is at stake.

After reviewing area biologist Dave Crowley's unit 9 bear data, I have concluded that shortening the fall season by a week to read October 7-21 and shortening the spring season to read May 10-25 would be a good step in heading off biological problems with brown bears in unit 9E. These season dates were originally adopted in the late 1980s to reduce level of effort and harvest allowing for better recruitment of brown bears. This along with other favorable conditions including strong salmon escapements and abundant berry crops had a positive effect in accomplishing this goal. I believe that changing the season dates as described will have a very positive effect. Keep in mind that hunter effort in unit 9 has declined by 10% in the last three seasons as has harvest. I am absolutely certain that poor hunting conditions have attributed to some of the decline. Adopting a permit drawing scheme in one small portion of unit 9E will not address any perceived biological problems throughout the whole of unit 9E.

As I indicated in my testimony, conflicts among users on state lands where there are currently no limits on the number of guides able to register for use areas needs to be addressed as soon as possible. After years and years of public input and development, a system is ready to be implemented and the seed funding is available to make this happen. In addition to shortening the seasons, implementation of a state lands guide area system will prevent overharvest and reduce conflicts among users.

RE: Proposal 132

I am strongly opposed to setting an earlier resident only season. This can only increase the possibility of additional harvest and most certainly increase the likelihood of conflicts in the field. A one week earlier start really translates in practice of two weeks of activity, which will create commotion in key hunting areas. As you know, mature bears are very sensitive. Many resident hunters are generally less selective and are not seasoned to hunting tactics such as quietness and wind sensitivity. Contrary to assertions by some, particularly airplane hunters who spend considerable time "scouting," there are more than ample locations to hunt where they will not encounter guides, especially on federal lands. Resident hunters have never had more opportunity to hunt for Brown Bears state wide than they do now.

Your consideration of my views is greatly appreciated.

Respectfully,

Joe Klutsch

Background

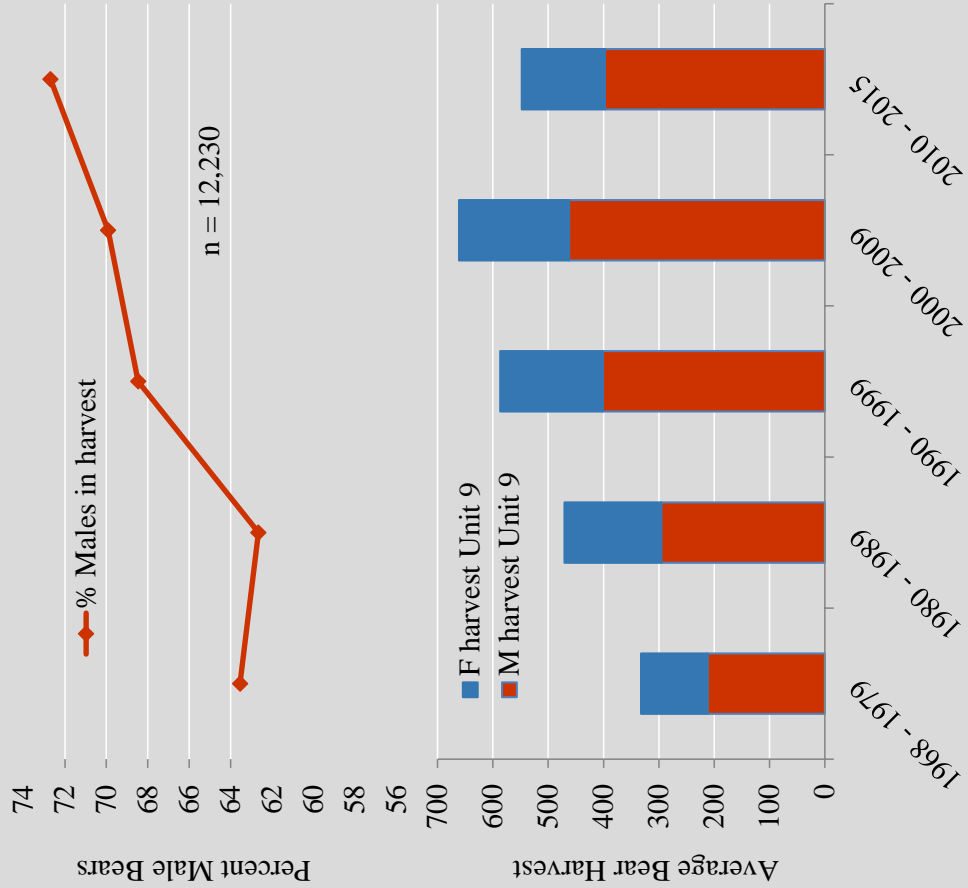
- Noticeably fewer bears on the landscape, particularly large adults 2013–2017
 - Observations by staff conducting ungulate work over vast area
 - Calf mortality projects, ungulate captures, aerial surveys
- Concern by long-time guides over lack of adult bears
- Calls from public “Where’s the bears?” 2013–2015
- Sows with multiple cubs increased in 2016
 - Triplets and even quads in 2016 and 2017
- 16% decline in hunter success rate in recent registration hunts 2011 through 2015
- Recent and abrupt increase in age structure of harvested bears

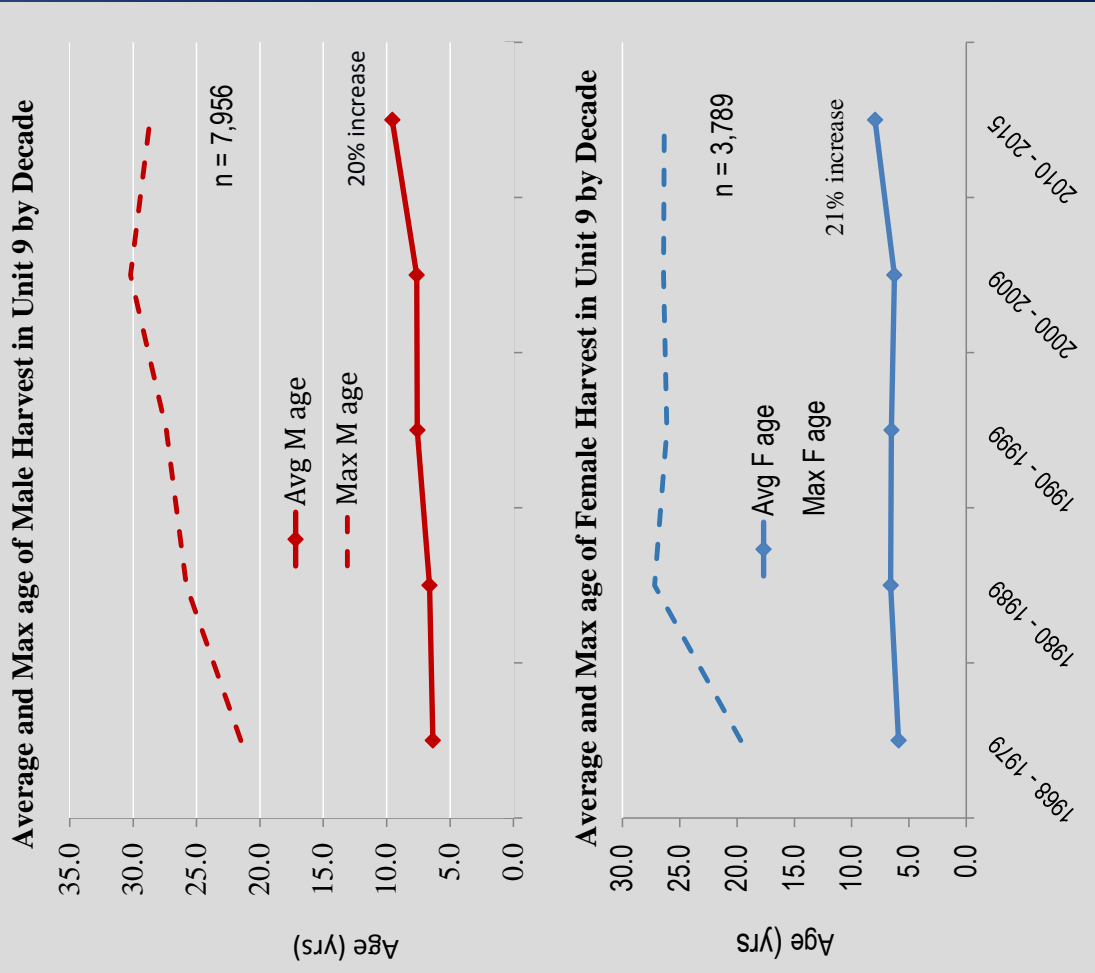
Considerations

- Resident bear harvest in Unit 9 is limited by hunter participation 26% , not by bag limit of 1 bear per 4 years.
 - Resident hunters rarely take more than 1 bear in Unit 9 (only 1% of hunters in the last 2 decades
 - Most residents don't want or need additional brown bear
- RB525 “near-village” hunt is additional opportunity for residents only
 - Interest in hunt has waned
- Abrupt changes in age structure of harvest.

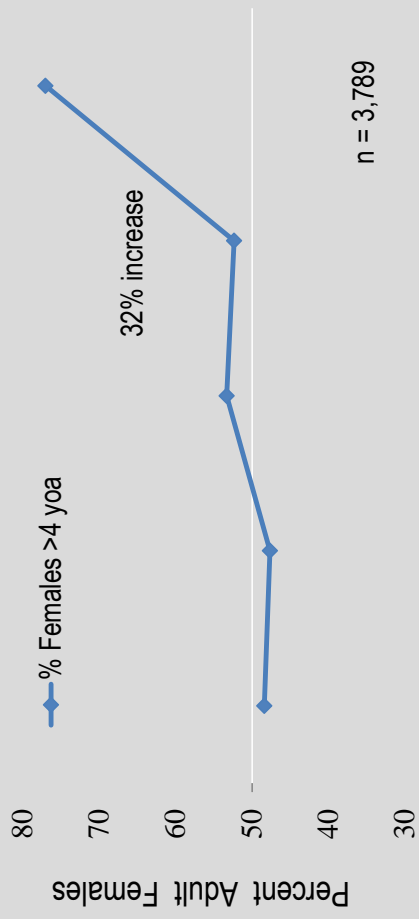
Pooled Harvest Data

Proportion of male brown bears in the harvest, Unit 9

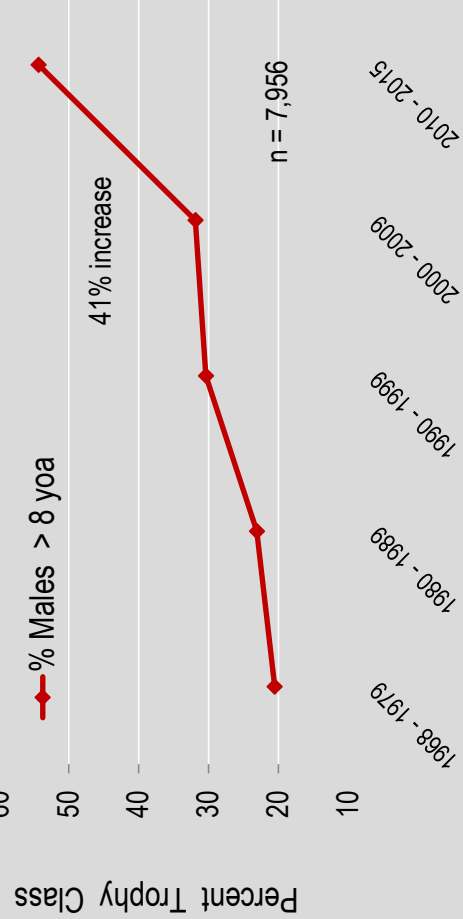


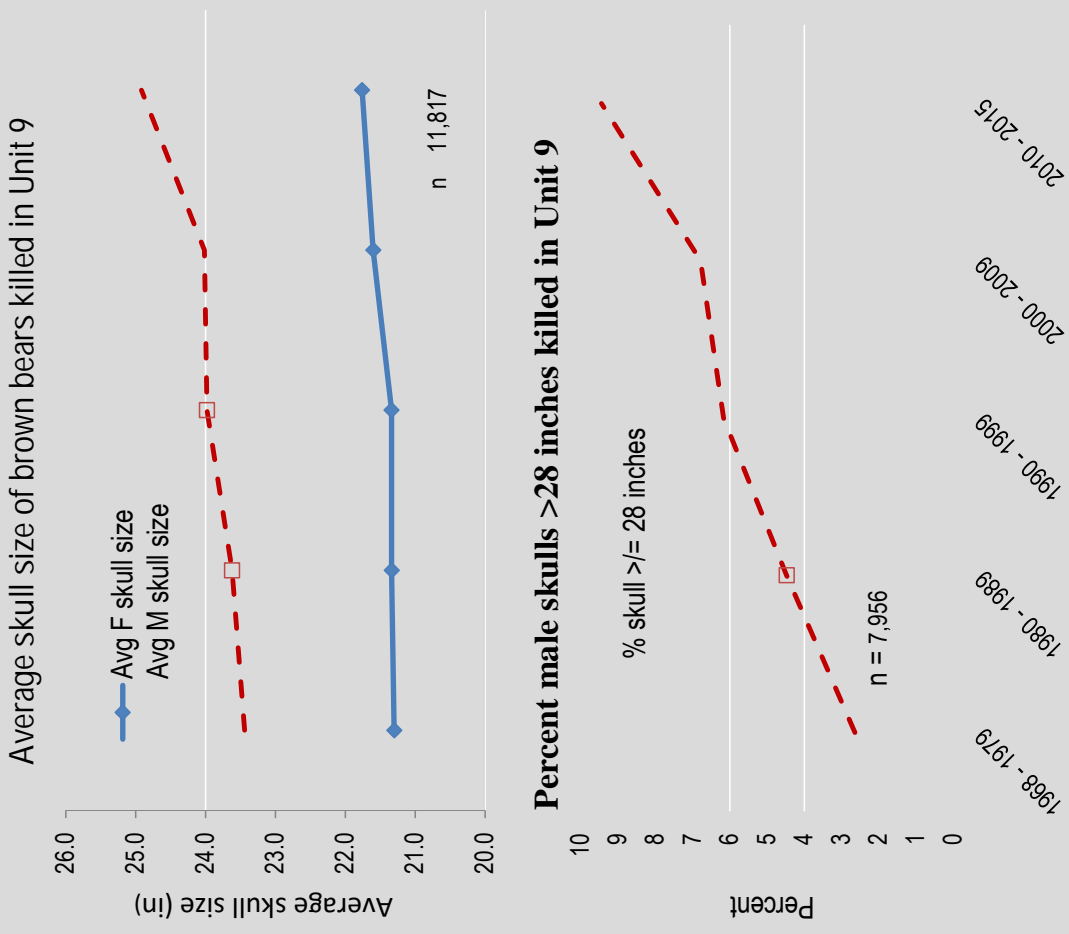


Proportion of Adult Females (> 4 yoa) in Female Harvest, Unit 9



Proportion of Trophy Bears (males > 8 yoa) in Male Harvest, Unit 9





Considerations

- Unit 9 brown bear population showing two important changes of concern:
 1. Long-term decline in harvest indicating a probable population decline;
 2. Abrupt increase in age of bears in harvest and field observations suggesting recent loss of cohort or 2 from natural mortality.
- Although increasing resident hunting opportunity would not increase bear harvest substantially, we recommend against any increase in harvest given population status.