

PROPOSAL 216

5 AAC 85.045(a)(11). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

Establish an antlerless moose season in Unit 13C as follows:

Units and Bag Limits (11)	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
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Unit 13
1 moose per regulatory year,
only as follows:

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<u>1 antlerless moose by drawing permit only in Unit 13(C); up to 200 permits may be issued; a person may not take a calf, or a cow accompanied by a calf</u>	<u>Oct. 1–Oct. 31 (General hunt only)</u>	<u>No open season</u>
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What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? To maintain moose populations within their population and sex ratio objectives, antlerless moose hunts are an essential management tool to adjust the population trajectory through additional sustainable harvest opportunities.

There is a positive customary and traditional use finding for moose in all of Unit 13, and an amount reasonably necessary for subsistence of 300–600 moose.

The current population abundance objective for Unit 13C is 2,000–3,000 moose. Moose abundance in Unit 13C has increased from less than 2,000 moose in 2004 to more than 3,300 moose in 2019 and 2020. The current abundance is in line with the peak observed for the Unit 13C population in the late 1980s and late 1990s. Most recently the population peaked between 3,800 and 4,000 moose in 2014–2016 and then declined, supporting the long-term observations that suggest that Unit 13C cannot sustain those levels of moose abundance over the long-term. The calf-to-cow ratio in Unit 13C has shown a declining trend over the past decade, which is typical of an ungulate population as it becomes less productive when the population approaches the carrying capacity of the area.

The harvest objective for Unit 13C is 155–350 moose. Moose harvest in this subunit over the past five years averages 98 moose annually, which represents the highest harvest numbers since 1998. Recent composition surveys indicate that the bull-to-cow ratio has been hovering at or below 25 bulls per 100 cows, (the current objective for Unit 13C) indicating that there are no additional bulls available for harvest under the current intensive management program. An antlerless hunt in Unit

13C will allow the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to maintain the moose population within abundance objectives and composition objectives. Stabilizing the population within the objectives will allow for a more productive population, producing more bulls as well as cows for an increase in overall harvestable surplus.

If antlerless moose hunting opportunities are not available for Unit 13C, the intensive management program and objectives will need to be restructured to maintain the moose population within a population size range that does not result in nutritional limitations for the moose, and the harvest objectives recommended by the public, advisory committees, and the board will need to be reevaluated.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

(HQ-F21-21)
