

Federal Wildlife Proposal

Proponent

Seward Peninsula Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

Issue

Extend the Seward Peninsula Federal muskox season closing date in Units 22 and 23, south of Kotzebue Sound and west of and including the Buckland River drainage (Unit 23 southwest) from March 15 to March 31. This season extension will affect five muskox hunts in Unit 22 and one muskox hunt in Unit 23 southwest for a total of six hunts.

Current Federal Regulations

Unit 22–Muskox

Unit 22B – 1 bull by State permit or Federal drawing permit (FX2203). Aug. 1-Mar. 15. Federal public lands are closed to the taking of musk ox except by federally qualified subsistence users hunting under these regulations.

Unit 22D, that portion west of the Tisuk River drainage and Canyon Creek – Sept. 1-Mar. 15. 1 bull by State permit or Federal drawing permit (FX2205). Federal public lands are closed to the harvest of musk ox except by residents of Nome and Teller hunting under these regulations.

Unit 22D, that portion within the Kuzitrin River drainages – 1 bull by State Aug. 1-Mar. 15. permit or Federal drawing permit (FX2206). Federal public lands are closed to the taking of musk ox except for residents of Council, Golovin, White Mountain, Nome, Teller, and Brevig Mission hunting under these regulations.

Unit 22D, remainder – 1 bull by State permit or Federal drawing permit Aug. 1-Mar. 15. (FX2208). Federal public lands are closed to the taking of musk ox except by residents of Elim, White Mountain, Nome, Teller, and Brevig Mission hunting under these regulations.

Unit 22E – 1 bull by State permit or Federal drawing permit (FX2210). Aug. 1-Mar. 15. Federal public lands are closed to the harvest of musk ox except by federally qualified subsistence users hunting under these regulations.

Unit 22, remainder

No Federal open season

Unit 23–Muskox

Unit 23, south of Kotzebue Sound and west of and including the Buckland Aug. 1-Mar. 15. River drainage – 1 bull by State permit or Federal drawing permit (FX2302).

Proposed Federal Regulation

Unit 22–Muskox

Unit 22B – 1 bull by State permit or Federal drawing permit (FX2203). Aug. 1-Mar. 30
Federal public lands are closed to the taking of musk ox except by federally ~~15.~~
qualified subsistence users hunting under these regulations.

Unit 22D, that portion west of the Tisuk River drainage and Canyon Creek – Sept. 1-Mar. 30
1 bull by State permit or Federal drawing permit (FX2205). Federal public ~~15.~~
lands are closed to the harvest of musk ox except by residents of Nome and
Teller hunting under these regulations.

Unit 22D, that portion within the Kuzitrin River drainages – 1 bull by State Aug. 1-Mar. 30
permit or Federal drawing permit (FX2206). Federal public lands are closed ~~15.~~
to the taking of musk ox except for residents of Council, Golovin, White
Mountain, Nome, Teller, and Brevig Mission hunting under these regulations.

Unit 22D, remainder – 1 bull by State permit or Federal drawing permit Aug. 1-Mar. 30
(FX2208). Federal public lands are closed to the taking of musk ox except by ~~15.~~
residents of Elim, White Mountain, Nome, Teller, and Brevig Mission hunting
under these regulations.

Unit 22E – 1 bull by State permit or Federal drawing permit (FX2210). Aug. 1-Mar. 30
Federal public lands are closed to the harvest of musk ox except by federally ~~15.~~
qualified subsistence users hunting under these regulations.

Unit 22, remainder *No Federal open season*

Unit 23–Muskox

Unit 23, south of Kotzebue Sound and west of and including the Buckland Aug. 1-Mar. 30
River drainage – 1 bull by State permit or Federal drawing permit (FX2302). ~~15.~~

Justification

This regulatory year, the Seward Peninsula saw minimal to no snowpack, rain which created icy conditions and bare ground, as well as some of the highest December temperatures on record, all of which impacted hunting opportunities and safe travel conditions for 3 months. While historically, late February and early March provided favorable travel conditions, it has become the norm for multiple winter storms to impact the Seward Peninsula during this time, impeding travel and subsistence hunting.

The majority of subsistence muskox hunters want to harvest a bull muskox in the winter when they are not in the rut, and when the hide is in full qiviut so the entire animal can be utilized. The purpose of this proposal is to allow for the continuation of subsistence muskox hunting opportunities while ensuring the best management practices for the Seward Peninsula muskox population.

There will be no biological impact or increased disturbance to muskoxen with this requested 2-week extension. Cow muskoxen, specifically pregnant cow muskox, will not be affected any more than they were with the season ending March 15. Cows start to give birth in late April, but the majority of calves

are successfully born in May. Additionally, only 14 Federal muskox permits have been collectively awarded across these 6 hunt areas, so few hunters are expected to hunt and disturb muskox groups.

Extending the Seward Peninsula federal muskox seasons by 2-weeks will provide additional opportunity for federally qualified subsistence users to harvest a bull muskox due to access issues caused by these now recurring catastrophic winter weather events and new environmental conditions.