

## WP26–47 Executive Summary

<b>General Description</b>	Wildlife Proposal WP26-47, requests to remove the restriction in trapping regulations against disturbing or destroying beaver houses in Unit 18. <i>Submitted by: Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council</i>
<b>Proposed Regulation</b>	<p><b>§ 51.26(d) Trapping furbearing animals.</b></p> <p><i>The following methods and means of trapping furbearers for subsistence uses pursuant to the requirements of a trapping license are prohibited, in addition to the prohibitions listed at paragraph (b) of this section:</i></p> <p><i>(2) Disturbing or destroying any beaver house, <b>except that you may disturb or destroy a beaver house in Unit 18;</b></i></p>
<b>OSM Preliminary Conclusion</b>	<b>Support</b> Proposal WP26-47
<b>Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Recommendation</b>	
<b>Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Recommendation</b>	
<b>Interagency Staff Committee Comments</b>	
<b>ADF&amp;G Comments</b>	
<b>Written Public Comments</b>	None

## **Draft Wildlife Analysis WP26-47**

### **ISSUE**

Wildlife Proposal WP26-47, submitted by the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council), requests to remove the restriction in trapping regulations against disturbing or destroying beaver houses in Unit 18

### **Proponent Statement**

The proponent states that removing these restrictions will increase opportunity for federally qualified subsistence users and that there are no conservation concerns for beaver in Unit 18

### **Current Federal Regulations**

#### **§ 51.26(d) Trapping furbearing animals.**

*The following methods and means of trapping furbearers for subsistence uses pursuant to the requirements of a trapping license are prohibited, in addition to the prohibitions listed at paragraph (b) of this section:*

*(2) Disturbing or destroying any beaver house;*

### **Proposed Federal Regulations**

#### **§ 51.26(d) Trapping furbearing animals.**

*The following methods and means of trapping furbearers for subsistence uses pursuant to the requirements of a trapping license are prohibited, in addition to the prohibitions listed at paragraph (b) of this section:*

*(2) Disturbing or destroying any beaver house, **except that you may disturb or destroy a beaver house in Unit 18;***

### **Relevant Federal Regulations**

#### **Unit 18—Beaver (Hunting/Trapping)**

*Beaver: No limit*

*July 1-June 30*

## **Current State Regulations**

### **5 AAC 92.095. Unlawful methods of taking furbearers; exceptions.**

*(a) The following methods and means of taking furbearers under a trapping license are prohibited, in addition to the prohibitions in 5 AAC 92.080:*

*(2) by disturbing or destroying any beaver house;*

## **Relevant State Regulations**

### **Unit 18– Beaver (Hunting/Trapping)**

*Unit 18*

*No limit*

*No closed season*

## **Extent of Federal Public Lands**

Unit 18 is comprised of 68% Federal public lands and consists of 65% U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) managed lands and 3% Bureau of Land Management (BLM) managed lands.

## **Customary and Traditional Use Determination**

The Federal Subsistence Board has not made a customary and traditional use determination for beaver in Unit 18. Therefore, all rural residents of Alaska may harvest this species in this unit.

## **Regulatory History**

The prohibition on disturbing or destroying a beaver house under a trapping license has been in State regulations since at least 1971. In 1990, this prohibition was adopted into Federal regulations from State regulations when the Federal subsistence management program began.

In October 1999, the Alaska Board of Game (BOG) adopted Proposal 1 as amended to reclassify beaver as a game animal, eliminate the sealing requirement, and establish a ‘no closed season’ with no bag limit for beaver in Units 18, 22, 23, and 26A under both trapping and hunting regulations. ADF&G reported that beaver were abundant and expanding their range, and the BOG agreed there was no biological reason not to liberalize seasons and harvest limits for beaver. The BOG lifted the sealing requirement to simplify regulations and to provide additional opportunity to harvest beaver in these units (BOG 1999). In January 2000, the BOG adopted Proposal 104 to reclassify beaver as a fur animal statewide, allowing beaver harvest under a hunting license once hunting seasons were established (BOG 2000).

In 2000, the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) adopted Wildlife Proposal P00-40, which established a hunt for beavers in Unit 18 with a year-round season and no harvest limit and extended the trapping

season to year-round, aligning with State regulations. State and Federal regulations for beaver hunting and trapping have not changed since.

### **Biological Background**

Beavers have historically been the most important furbearer in Unit 18. Beaver populations are considered abundant throughout all of Region V, which includes Units 18, 22, 23 and 26A (Bogle 2025). Densities in Unit 18 have remained high throughout the unit and appear to be the highest southeast of the Kuskokwim River in the Kilbuck Mountains and along the lakes and sloughs of the Johnson River southwest of Bethel (OSM 2000). Beavers provide an important food item for local residents. Beaver dams can impede fish movement. However, as beavers cut down small trees and clear away brush, they create new habitats that are ideal for other animals. Waterfowl use these areas for feeding and nesting. Ponds created by beavers often serve as fish habitat (OSM 2000).

### **Harvest History**

Harvest of beavers is not well documented since sealing is not required for Unit 18 and information attained is through voluntary trapper questionnaires. Unit 18 is part of the State's Region 5, which includes Units 18, 22, 23 and 26A. There were no reports of beaver harvest in the few questionnaires for the region in recent years (Bogle 2025). As a whole, Region 5 receives less than 10% participation in the trapper questionnaires each year with most years only receiving 2-3% responses (Bogle 2025).

### **Discussion and Effects**

If this proposal is adopted, trappers could disturb or destroy a beaver house in Unit 18 when taking beavers under a trapping license, increasing subsistence opportunity. As this prohibition does not apply to the take of beavers under a hunting license, beaver houses may already be destroyed or disturbed when hunting unless otherwise prohibited by agency specific regulations.

The impacts to the beaver population of this regulation are uncertain, but conservation concerns are unlikely given the extremely liberal hunting and trapping regulations under both State and Federal regulations of year-round seasons and 'no harvest limits.' Depending on the time of year, beavers may have kits in their lodge. A possible concern of allowing beaver lodges to be disturbed or destroyed is increasing the likelihood of wanton waste if beavers in a lodge are killed, but not salvaged.

Adopting this proposal increases regulatory complexity and complicates law enforcement by misaligning State and Federal regulations, requiring trappers to differentiate land status.

### **OSM PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION**

**Support Proposal WP26-47**

#### **Justification**

This proposal increases subsistence opportunity and there are no conservation concerns.

## LITERATURE CITED

ADF&G. 2025. Beaver (*Castor canadensis*) Species Profile.  
<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=beaver.main>.

Bogle, S. E. 2025. 2023 Alaska trapper report: 1 July 2023–30 June 2024. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Wildlife Management Report ADF&G/DWC/WMR-2025-1, Juneau.

OSM. 2000. Staff analysis P00-40. Federal Subsistence Board Meeting Materials. 2000. Office of Subsistence Management, USFWS. Anchorage, AK.