

DRAFT STAFF ANALYSIS WP26-01B - SOUTHCENTRAL

Introduction

Please see the WP26-01 master analysis for the Issues, Proponent Statement, Regulatory History, and Discussion and Effects sections.

Proposed Federal Regulations - Southcentral

Caribou

Note: OSM added the authority to “set the number of permits issued” to reflect how the hunt is currently being managed and because unlimited permits are not appropriate for draw hunts.

OSM also combined the Unit 15B and 15C hunt areas to simplify regulations and added the authority to “define harvest areas” to reflect how the hunt is currently being managed to address conservation concerns.

Unit 15—Caribou

Unit 15B, within the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge Wilderness Area, and Unit 15C, north of the Fox River and east of Windy Lake—1 caribou by Federal drawing permit Aug. 10-Sep. 20

The Kenai NWR manager after coordination with ADF&G, OSM, and the Chair of the affected Council(s) is authorized within the regulatory parameters set by the Board, to close the season, define harvest areas, and set harvest quotas, sex restrictions, and the number of permits issued.

~~*Unit 15C, north of the Fox River and east of Windy Lake—1 caribou by Federal drawing permit Aug. 10-Sep. 20*~~

Unit 15, remainder No open season

Deer

Note: The DAL for Unit 6 deer specifies coordination with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Anchorage Field Office Manager. OSM corrected this to the BLM Glennallen Field Office manager to accurately reflect BLM districts.

Also, the Unit 6 DAL for moose and deer is combined. Some of the authority was not appropriate for both species. Therefore, OSM only transferred the relevant authority from the DAL into the unit-specific regulations for deer.

Unit 6—Deer

Unit 6—5 deer; however, antlerless deer may be taken only from Oct. 1-Jan. 31. Aug. 1-Jan. 31. Only 1 of the 5-deer harvest limit may be taken between Jan. 1-31

The Cordova District Ranger after coordination with ADF&G, OSM, BLM Glennallen Field Office (for BLM affected lands), Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve (for NPS affected lands), and the Chair of affected Council(s) is authorized within the regulatory parameters set by the Board, to adjust harvest and possession limits, including sex restrictions.

Goat

Note: OSM added Kenai National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) to the entities for coordination since Kenai NWR lands occur in Unit 7. OSM also added the authority to “define harvest zones” to reflect how the hunt is currently being managed.

Unit 7—Goat

Unit 7—1 goat by Federal drawing permit. Nannies accompanied by kids Aug. 10-Nov 14. may not be taken.

The Seward District Ranger after coordination with ADF&G, OSM, Kenai NWR and the Chair of the affected Council(s) is authorized within the regulatory parameters set by the Board, to close the season, and set harvest quotas, number of permits issued, and sex restrictions, and define harvest zones.

Note: OSM added the authorities to “define harvest zones” and to “set the number of permits issued” to reflect how the hunt is currently being managed and because unlimited permits are not appropriate for draw hunts.

Unit 15—Goat

Unit 15—1 goat by Federal drawing permit. Kids or nannies accompanied by Aug. 10-Nov. 14 kids may not be taken.

The Kenai NWR manager after coordination with ADF&G, OSM, and the Chair of the affected Council(s) is authorized within the regulatory parameters set by the Board, to close the season, and set harvest quotas, number of permits issued, and sex restrictions, and define harvest zones.

Moose

Note: OSM reformatted the Unit 6C moose regulation for clarity and simplicity. OSM also deleted repetitive, unnecessary delegated authority language. These are administrative changes.

Also, the Unit 6 DAL for moose and deer is combined. The DAL required coordination with BLM and NPS, neither of which have lands in Unit 6C. Therefore, OSM did not specify coordination with either BLM or NPS in the unit-specific regulations below.

Unit 6—Moose

Unit 6C—1 antlerless moose by Federal drawing permit only Sep. 1-Oct. 31

Permits for the portion of the antlerless moose quota not harvested in the Sep. 1-Oct. 31 hunt may be available for redistribution for a Nov. 1-Dec. 31 hunt

OR

1 bull by Federal drawing permit only Sep. 1-Dec. 31

In Unit 6C, only one moose permit may be issued per household. A household receiving a State permit for Unit 6C moose may not receive a Federal permit. ~~The annual harvest quota will be announced by the U.S. Forest Service, Cordova Office, in consultation with ADF&G.~~ The Federal harvest allocation will be 100% of the antlerless moose permits and 75% of the bull permits

The Cordova District Ranger after coordination with ADF&G, OSM, and the Chair of affected Council(s) is authorized within the regulatory parameters set by the Board, to set harvest quotas, close/reopen/adjust

seasons, adjust harvest and possession limits, including sex restrictions, and close Federal public lands to all users.

Unit 6, remainder

*No open
season*

Note: The Unit 7 moose DAL is only for the “Seward Ranger District of the Chugach National Forest.” OSM applied the delegated authority to the entire hunt area, which includes portions of Kenai NWR and the Glacier Ranger District and added the other affected land managers to the entities for coordination.

The Unit 7 moose DAL also includes the authority to “close Federal public lands to all users.” OSM did not transfer this authority into the unit-specific regulations as it has not been used by the Federal in-season manager and is no longer necessary.

Unit 7—Moose

Unit 7, remainder—1 antlered bull with spike-fork or 50-inch antlers or with 3 or more brow tines on either antler, by Federal registration permit only Aug. 20-Sep. 25

The Seward District Ranger after coordination with ADF&G, OSM, Kenai NWR, the USFS Glacier Ranger District, and the Chair of the affected Council(s) is authorized within the regulatory parameters set by the Board, to set a harvest quota and season dates, reopen/adjust seasons, adjust harvest and possession limits.

Note: OSM added Chugach National Forest to the list of entities required for coordination. Chugach National Forest was not specified in the Unit 11 DAL, but this hunt area includes USFS lands within the Chugach National Forest.

Unit 11—Moose

*Unit 11, that portion south and east of a line running along the north bank of the Chitina River, the north and west banks of the **Nizina** River, and the west bank of West Fork of the **Nizina** River, continuing along the western edge of the West Fork Glacier to the summit of Regal Mountain—1 bull by Federal registration permit. However, during the period Aug. 20-Sep. 20, only an antlered bull may be taken.* Aug. 20-Sep. 20.
Nov. 20-Jan. 20.

The Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve superintendent after coordination with ADF&G, OSM, Chugach National Forest, and the

Chair of the affected Council(s) is authorized within the regulatory parameters set by the Board, to set harvest quotas and season dates for the winter season.

Note: The Unit 15 moose DAL includes the authority to “adjust harvest and possession limits, including antler restrictions.” OSM did not transfer this authority into the unit-specific regulations for the Unit 15C cow hunt given the current, one cow harvest limit in regulation, which renders that authority null and void.

The Unit 15 moose DAL also includes the authority to “close Federal public lands to all users.” OSM did not transfer this authority into the unit-specific regulations as it has not been used by the Federal in-season manager and is no longer necessary.

While not explicit in the submitted proposal, the proponent intended the authority currently in regulation for the Units 15B and 15C late fall hunt to be deleted as it is duplicative and unnecessary.

Unit 15—Moose

Unit 15A—Skilak Loop Wildlife Management Area

No open season

Units 15A remainder, 15B, and 15C—1 antlered bull with spike-fork or 50-inch antlers or with 3 or more brow tines on either antler, by Federal registration permit only

Aug. 20-Sep. 25

The Kenai NWR manager after coordination with ADF&G, OSM, and the Chair of the affected Council(s) is authorized within the regulatory parameters set by the Board, to set harvest quotas, adjust harvest and possession limits, including antler restrictions, and close/reopen/adjust seasons.

Units 15B and 15C—1 antlered bull with spike-fork or 50-inch antlers or with 3 or more brow tines on either antler, by Federal registration permit only. ~~The Kenai NWR Refuge Manager is authorized to close the October–November season based on conservation concerns, in consultation with ADF&G and the Chair of the Southcentral Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council~~

Oct. 20–Nov. 10

The Kenai NWR manager after coordination with ADF&G, OSM, and the Chair of the affected Council(s) is authorized within the regulatory parameters set by the Board, to set harvest quotas, adjust harvest and

possession limits, including antler restrictions, and close/reopen/adjust seasons.

Unit 15C—1 cow by Federal registration permit only

Aug. 20-Sep. 25

The Kenai NWR manager after coordination with ADF&G, OSM, and the Chair of the affected Council(s) is authorized within the regulatory parameters set by the Board, to set harvest quotas and close/reopen/adjust seasons.

Sheep

Note: The Unit 7 sheep DAL does not specify coordination with Kenai NWR, which OSM added to the authority delegated in the unit-specific regulation. OSM also added the authority to “define harvest zones” to reflect how the hunt is currently managed.

Unit 7—Sheep

Unit 7—1 ram with full curl horn or larger by Federal drawing permit

Aug. 10-Sep. 20

The Seward District Ranger after coordination with ADF&G, OSM, Kenai NWR and the Chair of the affected Council(s) is authorized within the regulatory parameters set by the Board, to close the season, set the harvest quota, number of permits issued, and define harvest zones.

Note: The Unit 15 sheep DAL does not specify coordination with the USFS Seward Ranger District, which OSM added to the authority delegated in the unit-specific regulation OSM added the authorities to “define harvest zones” and to “set the number of permits issued” to reflect how the hunt is currently being managed and because unlimited permits are not appropriate for draw hunts.

Unit 15—Sheep

Unit 15—1 ram with 3/4 curl horn or larger by Federal drawing permit

Aug 10-Sep. 20

The Kenai NWR manager after coordination with ADF&G, OSM, USFS Seward Ranger District and the Chair of the affected Council(s) is authorized within the regulatory parameters set by the Board, to close the season, set harvest quotas, number of permits issued, and define harvest zones.

Lynx

Note: The Southcentral Region has a DAL that authorizes, “The OSM director after coordination with ADF&G and the Chair of the affected Council(s) to close/open/adjust seasons and set harvest and possession limits for lynx in Units 7, 11, 13, 14, 15 and 16.” While, the rationale and origination of this DAL is uncertain, this authority has not been used for at least 10 years. OSM does not consider transferring this authority from the existing DAL into unit-specific regulations necessary or appropriate but does support rescinding this DAL.

Other Alternatives Considered

One alternative considered for moose in Unit 6 was to delegate authority to the Federal in-season manager to “close and reopen Federal public lands to nonsubsistence hunting.” A Federal public lands closure to moose hunting by non-federally qualified users from Nov. 1-Dec. 31 was recently rescinded in 2024 through WCR24-41. One of the reasons for rescission was because the DAL allowed the Federal manager to close Federal public lands to nonsubsistence users, making the codified closure redundant. However, this authority was not transferred to unit specific regulations in the submitted proposal because it is boilerplate language contained in every DAL, and closure authority is more appropriately retained by the Board (see Issue section in WP26-01 master analysis).

OSM did not further consider this alternative because 100% of antlerless moose permits are allocated to Federal harvest and the State season closes October 31. While the State has a moose hunt in codified regulations for Unit 6C from Nov. 1-Dec. 31, the State has not held an antlerless hunt in Unit 6C since 1999 because the antlerless moose quota is harvested under Federal subsistence regulations (ADF&G 2024).

Another alternative considered was to preserve the DAL conveying broad authority to manage deer in Unit 6 rather than transferring that authority into regulation. The Council and the Board may want to consider whether this authority is still necessary at all, and if it is, whether it is more appropriately retained as a DAL or in codified regulations. If it is retained as a DAL, a new DAL will need to be issued as moose and deer for Unit 6 are currently combined into one letter. Moose in Unit 6C undergo annual, routine management actions, so transferring authority into regulations for this specific hunt area is appropriate, while deer in Unit 6 do not have any routine management actions. Any in-season management action for Unit 6 deer would be a result of an unforeseen emergency situation. Therefore, a special action process would be more appropriate.

OSM PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

Support Proposal WP26-01b with modification to retain the broad authority to manage deer in Unit 6 as a Delegation of Authority letter.

The draft regulations read:

Unit 6—Deer

Unit 6—5 deer; however, antlerless deer may be taken only from Oct. 1-Jan. 31. Aug. 1-Jan. 31. Only 1 of the 5-deer harvest limit may be taken between Jan. 1-31

Justification

See the WP26-01 master analysis.

Retaining the broad management authority for Unit 6 deer in a DAL is more appropriate than transferring this authority to unit-specific regulations. Actions taken in this case fall outside of routine management actions and would arise from unforeseen, emergency situations. Therefore, they should be special actions as required in the DALs.

LITERATURE CITED

ADF&G. 2024. Proposal 152. Alaska Board of Game, Statewide Regulations Meeting. Mar. 21–28, 2025. Anchorage, AK.