

Special Action Request to the Federal Subsistence Board

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The National Park Service and the Bureau of Land Management request to change the federal muskox permit system in Game Management Units 22 and 23 from a federal registration permit to a federal drawing permit to reflect how the permits have been issued in this area since about 1998. This Special Action Request will continue to ensure the conservation of two healthy muskoxen populations and allow for the continuation of subsistence uses of these muskoxen populations. This housekeeping change will affect five muskoxen hunts in Game Management Unit 22 and three muskoxen hunts in Game Management Unit 23 for a total of eight hunts. We request the Special Action be effective for the entire 2022-2024 Wildlife regulatory cycle.

We request changing the wildlife In-Season Delegation of Authority language to standardize muskoxen hunts among the federal land management agencies within Game Management Units 22 and 23. The Scope of Delegation language for all 8 muskoxen hunts in Units 22 and 23 should read: Close the season, determine annual quotas, the number of permits to be issued, and the method of permit allocation between State and Federal permits.

Additionally, BLM and NPS request changing the in-season manager for the Unit 23 muskox hunt in the southwest portion of Unit 23 from the Western Arctic National Parklands superintendent to the BLM Anchorage Field Office manager to better reflect land status within the hunt area.

Current Federal Regulations

Unit 22B–Muskox

Unit 22B – 1 bull by State or Federal registration permit (FX2203). Federal Aug. 1-Mar. 15. public lands are closed to the harvest of muskox except by Federally qualified subsistence users.

Unit 22D–Muskox

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

Unit 22D–Muskox

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

Unit 22D remainder–Muskox

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

Unit 22E–Muskox

Unit 22E – 1 bull by State or Federal registration permit (FX2210). Federal Aug. 1-Mar. 15. public lands are closed to the taking of muskox except by Federally qualified subsistence users hunting under these regulations.

Unit 22 remainder–Muskox

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 or Federal registration permit (FX2302). Federal public lands are closed to the taking of muskox except by Federally qualified subsistence users hunting under these regulations.

Unit 23–Muskox

Unit 23 Cape Krusenstern National Monument—1 bull by Federal Aug. 1-Mar. 15. registration permit (FX2303). Cape Krusenstern National Monument is closed to the harvest of muskoxen except by Federally qualified subsistence users, excluding residents of Point Hope.

Unit 23–Muskox

Unit 23 – that portion north and west of the Kobuk River drainage – 1 bull by Aug. 1-Mar. 15. State or Federal (FX2312) registration permit.

Proposed Federal Regulation

Unit 22B–Muskox

Unit 22B – 1 bull by State **permit** or Federal ~~registration~~ **drawing** permit (FX2203). Federal public lands are closed to the harvest of muskox except by Federally qualified subsistence users. Aug. 1-Mar. 15.

Unit 22D–Muskox

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

Unit 22D–Muskox

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

Unit 22D remainder–Muskox

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

Unit 22E–Muskox

Unit 22E – 1 bull by State **permit** or Federal ~~registration~~ **drawing** permit (FX2210). Federal public lands are closed to the taking of muskox except by Federally qualified subsistence users hunting under these regulations. Aug. 1-Mar. 15.

Unit 23–Muskox

Unit 23 south of Kotzebue Sound and west of and including the Buckland River drainage – 1 bull by State **permit** or Federal ~~registration~~ **drawing** permit (FX2302). Federal public lands are closed to the taking of muskox except by Federally qualified subsistence users hunting under these regulations. Aug. 1-Mar. 15.

Unit 23–Muskox

*Unit 23 Cape Krusenstern National Monument—1 bull by Federal ~~registration~~ **drawing** permit (FX2303). Cape Krusenstern National Monument is closed to the harvest of muskoxen except by Federally qualified subsistence users, excluding residents of Point Hope.*

Aug. 1-Mar. 15.

Unit 23—Muskox

*Unit 23 – that portion north and west of the Kobuk River drainage – 1 bull by State **permit** or Federal (FX2312) ~~registration~~ **drawing** permit.*

Justification

The Seward Peninsula and Cape Thompson federal muskoxen hunts in Game Management Units 22 and 23 have been managed through a shared permit system and harvest quota with the State since 1998 at the guidance of the Seward Peninsula Muskox Cooperators. There are not enough animals in either the Cape Thompson or Seward Peninsula population to meet subsistence needs, and the State has been allowing only limited hunting opportunities (Tier II) since about 1998 for both populations. Federal managers use the best management practices available to conserve and maintain healthy populations, which is through a drawing permit system to prevent overharvest and provide for equal opportunity of permit issuance. The 2021 Seward Peninsula abundance census and the 2021 sex-age composition survey indicate a stable population since 2017. The 2020 Cape Thompson abundance census and the 2020 sex-age composition survey indicate the CAKR core portion of the population has been stable since 2011.

In November 2021 OSM staff brought to the attention of federal muskoxen hunt managers that the Delegation of Authority language was unclear, and therefore, led to misinterpretation on how federal muskoxen hunts were administered. All 8 federal hunts have been administered through a drawing permit system every regulatory year since about 1998 for the purpose of conserving natural and healthy populations while still allowing for subsistence uses by federally qualified subsistence users. The purpose of this Special Action Request is to continue these best management practices for both populations.

Administering hunts through a registration permit system as currently written in regulation will create significant adverse effects on the two muskoxen populations and negatively impact future hunting opportunities for federally qualified subsistence users. Without a drawing permit system in place, the nature of muskoxen behavior and winter distribution with minimal movement make it extremely easy to overharvest both populations and exceed the established harvest quota within a few hours. Another advantage of a drawing permit system is that it provides a distribution of permits to federally qualified subsistence users living in communities outside of Nome and Kotzebue equally who utilize the same hunt area and quota. Neither the Cape Thompson nor Seward Peninsula muskoxen populations can support the issuance of an unlimited number of federal muskoxen registration permits. These extenuating circumstances necessitate this Special Action Request.

During the next regulatory cycle, the National Park Service and the Bureau of Land Management will follow-up this Special Action Request with proposals requesting these changes be made permanent in regulation.