

WP14-54 Executive Summary	
General Description	Proposal WP14-54 requests that the moose season in Unit 26B remainder and Unit 26C be extended from July 1 to March 31 to July 1 to June 30, the harvest restrictions for Unit 26C (number, sex) be removed, and the harvest limit be increased from 3 moose to 5 moose. <i>Submitted by North Slope Regional Advisory Council.</i>
Proposed Regulation	<p>Unit 26B, remainder and 26C—Moose</p> <p><i>Units 26B, remainder and 26C—1 moose July 1–Mar. 31 June 30 by Federal registration permit by residents of Kaktovik only. The harvest quota is 35 moose (2 antlered bulls and 1 of either sex,) provided that no more than 2 antlered bulls may be harvested from Unit 26C and cows may not be harvested from Unit 26C. You may not take a cow accompanied by a calf in Unit 26B. Only 35 Federal registration permits will be issued.</i></p> <p><i>Federal public lands are closed to the taking of moose except by a Kaktovik resident holding a Federal registration permit and hunting under these regulations.</i></p>
OSM Preliminary Conclusion	Support Proposal WP14-54 with modification to only allow for the extension of the harvest season from July 1 to March 31 to July 1 to June 30.
North Slope Regional Council Recommendation	
Interagency Staff Committee Comments	
ADF&G Comments	
Written Public Comments	None

DRAFT STAFF ANALYSIS WP14-54

ISSUES

Proposal WP14-54, submitted by North Slope Regional Advisory Council (Council), requests that the moose season in Unit 26B remainder and Unit 26C be extended from July 1 to March 31 to July 1 to June 30, the harvest restrictions for Unit 26C (number, sex) be removed, and the harvest limit be increased from 3 moose to 5 moose.

DISCUSSION

The proponent would like to increase the harvest limit from 3 to 5 moose in Unit 26 C (**Map 1**) and Unit 26B remainder (**Map 2**) to allow subsistence hunters opportunity to harvest more moose. Given the expense and long distances required to find and harvest a moose, the current moose season and harvest limit of 3 moose is considered very restrictive and provides little meat for the community of Kaktovik. The proponent states that increasing the harvest from 3–5 moose should not impact the moose population, would help feed more families and would provide diversity from marine mammals in their annual diet. The proponent requests full consideration of the subsistence needs of the community and an investigation into historic harvest levels prior to the implementation of any subsistence restrictions.

In addition, the proponent requests that the moose season be extended to year-round hunt to allow the hunters the flexibility to hunt when the weather and travel conditions are suitable and safe. In recent years Kaktovik residents have encountered severe winter weather and storms which have prevented hunters from being able to hunt safely in March.

Existing Federal Regulation

Unit 26B remainder and 26C—Moose

Units 26B, remainder and 26C—1 moose by Federal registration permit by residents of Kaktovik only. The harvest quota is 3 moose (2 antlered bulls and 1 of either sex,) provided that no more than 2 antlered bulls may be harvested from Unit 26C and cows may not be harvested from Unit 26C. You may not take a cow accompanied by a calf in Unit 26B. Only 3 Federal registration permits will be issued.

July 1–Mar. 31

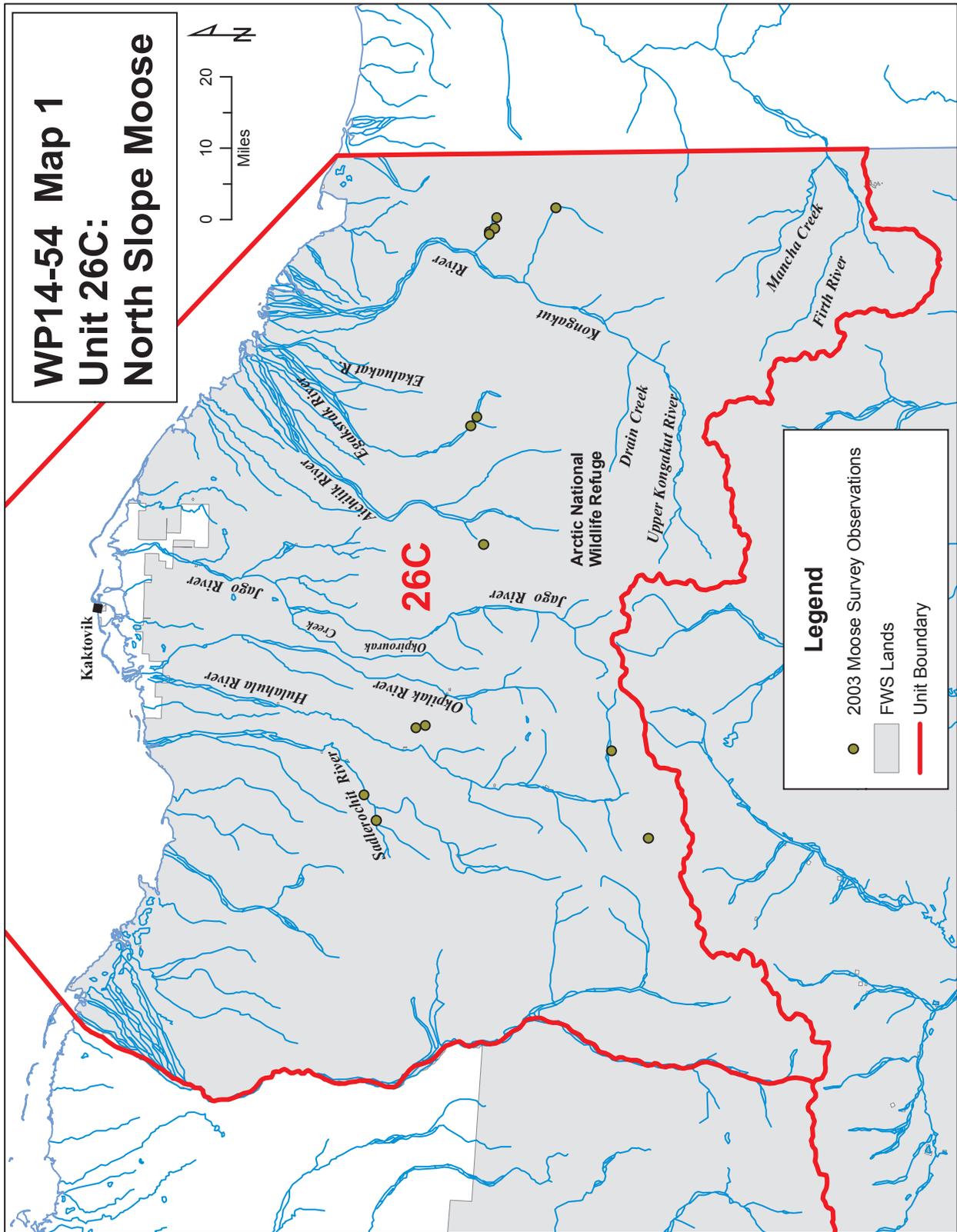
Federal public lands are closed to the taking of moose except by a Kaktovik resident holding a Federal registration permit and hunting under these regulations.

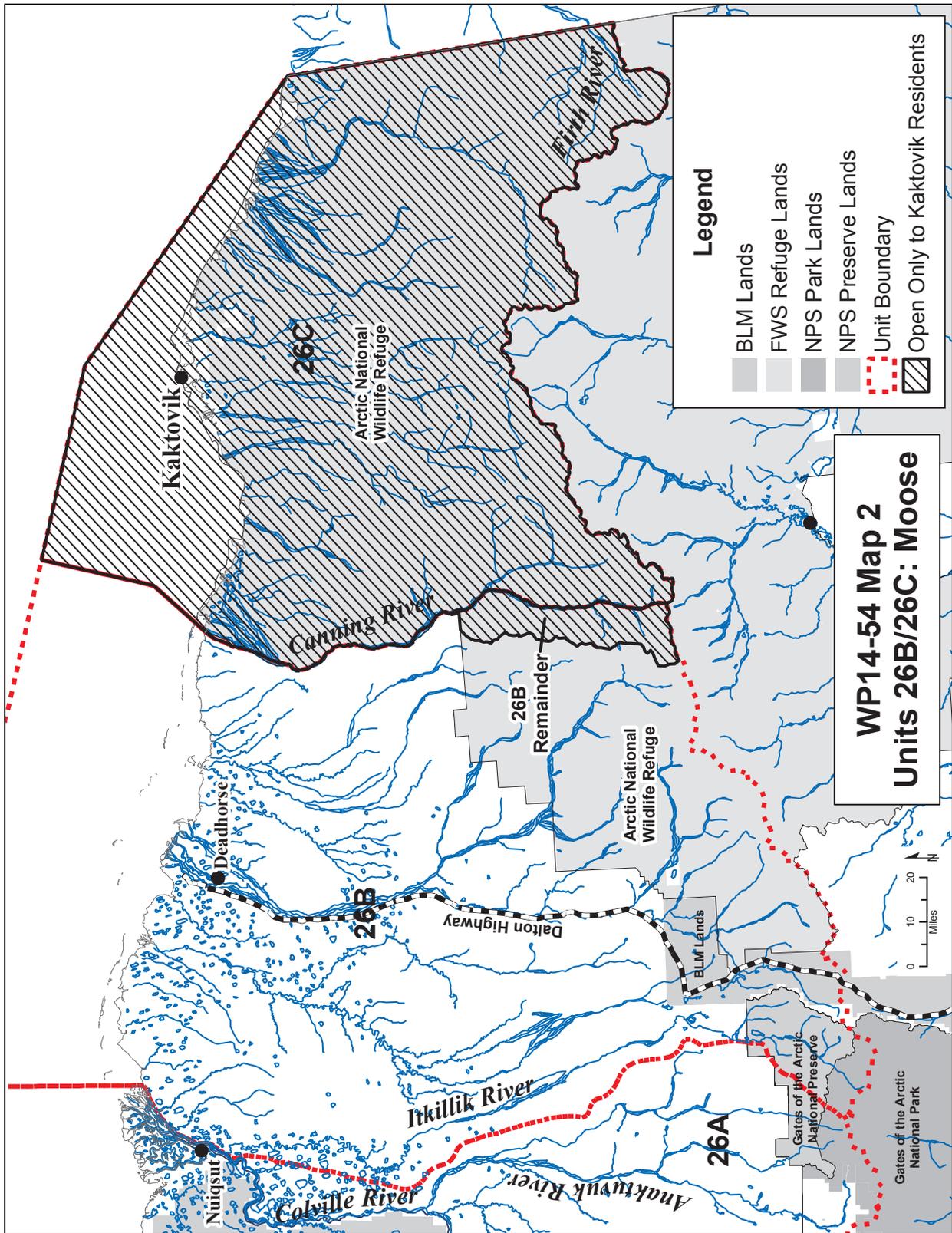
Proposed Federal Regulation

Unit 26B, remainder and 26C—Moose

*Units 26B, remainder and 26C—1 moose by Federal registration permit by residents of Kaktovik only. The harvest quota is **35** moose (2 antlered bulls and 1 of either sex,) provided that no more than 2 antlered bulls may be harvested from Unit 26C and cows may not be harvested from Unit 26C. You may not take a cow accompanied by a calf in Unit 26B. Only **35** Federal registration permits will be issued.*

*July 1–~~Mar. 31~~**June 30***





Federal public lands are closed to the taking of moose except by a Kaktovik resident holding a Federal registration permit and hunting under these regulations.

Existing State Regulation

Unit 26B—Moose

Unit 26B remainder

No open season

Unit 26C—Moose

*Unit 26C that portion in the drainages of Firth River and Mancha Creek and the Upper Kongakut River, upstream from and including Drain Creek**

Resident Hunters: *1 bull by drawing permit only; up to 30 permits may be issued;*

Sept. 1–Sept. 25

Nonresident hunters: *1 bull with 50-inch antlers or antlers with 4 or more brow tines on at least one side; by drawing permit only; up to 30 permits may be issued;*

Sept. 1 – Sept. 25

Unit 26C—remainder

No open season

***Note:** *Although a moose season in this portion of Unit 26C was established in State regulations by action of the Alaska Board of Game at their March 2–11, 2012 meeting: the hunt area is entirely on Federal public land and Federal lands are currently closed to the harvest of moose, except by Federally qualified subsistence users.*

Extent of Federal Public Lands

Approximately 98% of the lands in Unit 26C are comprised of Federal public lands managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Approximately 29% of the lands in Unit 26B are comprised of Federal public lands consisting of approximately 23% USFWS managed lands, 4% Bureau of Land Management managed lands, and 3% National Park Service managed lands.

Customary and Traditional Use Determinations

Residents of Unit 26 (except the Prudhoe Bay–Deadhorse Industrial Complex), Anaktuvuk Pass, and Point Hope have a positive customary and traditional use determination for moose in Unit 26. Federal public lands in Unit 26B remainder and Unit 26C were closed to non-Federally qualified users and those with recognized customary and traditional uses except the residents of Kaktovik. The prioritization of Kaktovik residents over other users was established through an ANILCA Section 804 analysis in Proposal WP04-86.

Regulatory History

Federal and State moose seasons in Units 26B and 26C were closed in 1996 due to low population of moose following declines in the early 1990s (Mauer 1997, Lenart 2010). These declines were probably

due to a combination of factors including weather, predation by wolves and grizzly bears, disease, and possibly insect harassment (Lenart 2008).

The Federal closure was temporarily lifted in 2003, when the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) approved a modification of Special Action WSA03-04 to allow residents of Kaktovik to harvest one moose in Units 26B and 26C for their Thanksgiving Feast and one moose for their Christmas Feast; however, only one moose could be harvested in Unit 26C (OSM 2003).

In 2004, the Board adopted Proposal WP04-86b with modification to allow of a harvest quota of 3 moose (2 bulls and 1 of either sex) with the following restrictions that no more than 2 bulls may be harvested and a cows may not be harvested in Unit 26C. The analysis for Proposal WP04-86 included an ANILCA Section 804 analysis (WP04-86a) which the Board used to give priority to the residents of Kaktovik for harvesting moose in Unit 26C.

Proposals WP06-67a and WP06-67b requested that residents of Unit 25A be added to the customary and traditional use determination for the Firth and Kongakut river drainages of Unit 26C (WP06-67a) and set a harvest limit of two moose per drainage (WP06-67b). Proposal WP06-67a was rejected by the Board because the residents of Arctic Village and the surrounding area did not have a demonstrated pattern of use of moose in Unit 26C. Proposal WP06-67b was rejected by the Board (FSB 2006) based on conservation concerns.

In 2007, the Board adopted Proposal WP07-63 with modification, to lift the closure of Federal public lands to non-Federally qualified users in the portion of Unit 26B outside of the Canning River drainage based on increasing moose populations in that portion of the unit (FSB 2007). The Board retained the closure of Federal public lands in Unit 26C and areas within the Canning River drainage in Unit 26B, except for residents of Kaktovik.

Proposal WP08-54 requested a modification of the moose harvest quota in Unit 26C to 5 bulls (4 bulls and 1 of either sex) with shorter harvest season from July 1 to December 31 vs. July 1 to March 31 for Kaktovik residents in Unit 26C and the proposal requested lifting the closure in the Canning River drainage of Unit 26B (Unit 26B remainder). The Board adopted the proposal with modification to keep the closure in place, except for residents of Kaktovik, but changed the harvest quota from 3 moose (2 bulls and 1 of either sex) to 3 moose (2 antlered bulls and 1 of either sex) (FSB 2008). Changing the harvest limit to antlered bulls was done to protect cows from being harvested later in the season when bulls have shed their antlers. The restriction of harvesting a cow accompanied by a calf was retained.

In March 2012, the Alaska Board of Game adopted Proposal 174A to establish a State moose season in a portion of Unit 26C which includes the Firth River, Mancha Creek and the Upper Kongakut River drainages; however, there has been no State season because the area consists of Federal public lands that are currently closed to the harvest of moose, except by Federally qualified subsistence users. A State season is contingent on the Board lifting the closure in the portion of Unit 26C in the Firth River, Mancha Creek and the Upper Kongakut River drainages. In March 2013, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), requested the closure to non-Federally qualified users be lifted in the Firth, Mancha, and upper Kongakut river drainages (upstream from and including Drain Creek) for the harvest of moose in Unit 26C. The remaining Federal public lands in Unit 26C and Unit 26B remainder would remain closed to the harvest of moose, except by residents of Kaktovik.

On April 3, 2013, the Board adopted Emergency Special Action (WSA12-12) with modification to allow Kaktovik residents to harvest one additional moose in Unit 26B remainder and to extend the season through April 14, 2013.

Current Events Involving the Species

Federal Wildlife Closure Review WCR12-31, which assessed the closure of Federal public lands in Units 26B remainder and 26C for moose harvest, was presented at both the Eastern Interior and the North Slope Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) meetings held in February 2013. Both Councils deferred action on this closure review until their fall 2013 meetings.

Biological Background

Unit 26C contains at least two distinct moose populations: the first occurring on the coastal plain and foothills in the North Slope portion of Unit 26C (North Slope population), and the other in the Firth, Mancha, and Upper Kongakut river drainages (Old Crow Flats population) (Mauer 1998). A majority of the moose population in the eastern portion of Unit 26C in the Brooks Range, calve and spend the summer in Old Crow Flats in the Yukon and migrate to the Firth, Mancha, and Upper Kongakut river drainages in Unit 26C, and the Sheenjek, and Coleen river drainages in Unit 25A during the fall and winter. Some moose in the Old Crow Flats population move between drainages during the fall or spring migration (Mauer 1998, Cooley 2013, pers. comm.).

Moose in Unit 26B remainder and Unit 26C are at the northern limits of their range in Alaska. The lack of quality habitat severely limits the potential size of moose populations. Moose are generally associated with the narrow strips of shrub communities along drainages, except during calving and summer when some seasonal movement occurs away from the riparian habitat (Lenart 2010). In winter moose are limited almost entirely to the riparian shrub habitat, which is the only area where they have access to willows. During surveys in the 1970s and 1980s, small numbers of moose were observed in the Sadlerochit, Hulahula, Okpilak, Okerokovik, Jago Aichilik and Egaksrak drainages and larger concentrations of moose were found on the Canning River and between the Sagavanirktok and Kavik rivers, west of the Canning River. The moose population in Units 26B and 26C peaked during the late 1980s at approximately 1,400 moose (Mauer and Akaran 1991; Lenart 2004, 2008), then declined in the early 1990s, and remained at approximately 700 animals throughout the remainder of the 1990s (Mauer 1998, Lenart 2008).

State management goals for moose in Units 26B and 26C are to maintain viable populations throughout their historic range in the region, to provide sustained moose harvest opportunity, and provide an opportunity for moose photography and viewing (Lenart 2010). Specific State management objectives for Unit 26B and Unit 26C are as follows (Lenart 2010):

- Unit 26B, maintain a population of at least 300 moose with short yearlings (10 to 11 month old calves) comprising at least 15% (3-year average) of the population.
- Unit 26C, maintain a population of at least 150 moose with short yearlings comprising at least 15% (3-year average) of the population.
- Maintain bull:cow ratios of at least 35 bulls:100 cows when hunting seasons are open for Unit 26B and Unit 26.

A comprehensive moose survey has not been conducted for Units 26B and 26C, however smaller scale surveys have been conducted in areas where moose concentrate to assess population trends. These trend surveys account for a large percentage of the moose in the units as habitat is limited in the region (Lenart 2010).

The moose population in the eastern portion of Unit 26B, including the Canning River, rebounded from low levels of around 150 in 1998–2000 to 335 observed individuals in 2005 (**Figure 1**). Due to conservation concerns, harvest was very limited in Unit 26B due to State and Federal harvest closures enacted in 1996. A limited season for Kaktovik residents was opened under Federal regulations in 2004. The moose harvest closure on Federal public lands in Unit 26B was lifted in 2007, except for the Canning River drainage which remained open only to Kaktovik residents. The moose population in eastern Unit 26B appears to have declined following peak counts in 2005–2008 (**Figure 1**). The composition of short yearlings in the population averaged 16% from 2005–2008, but declined to 11% short yearlings in 2009.

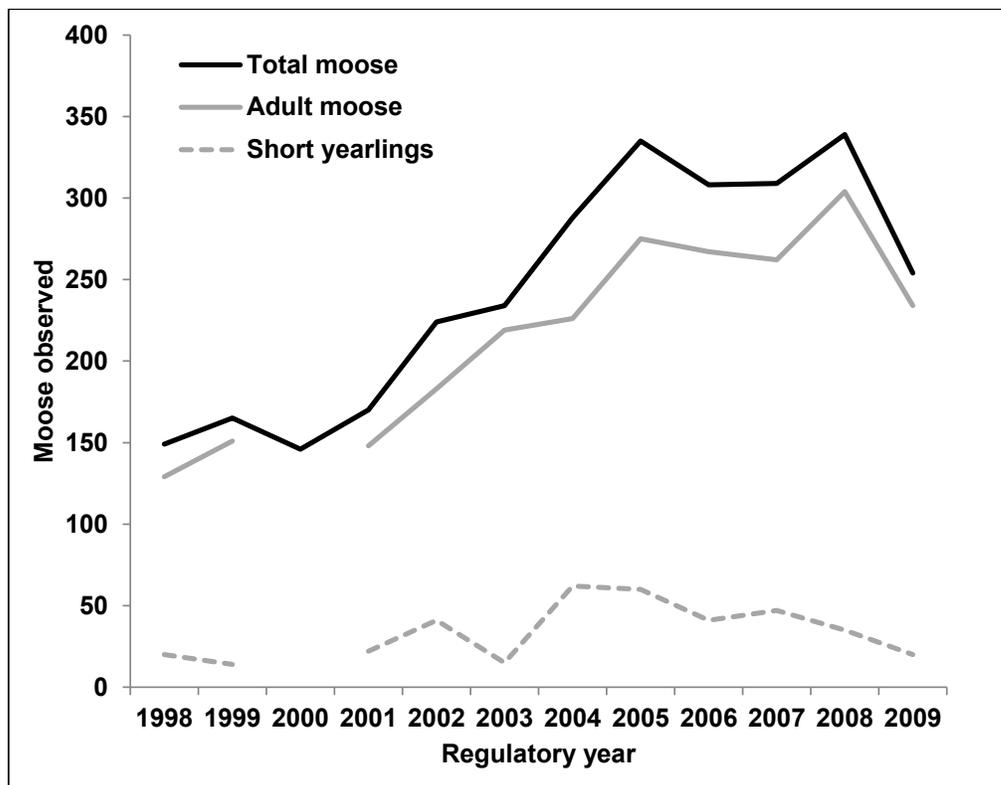


Figure 1. Aerial composition survey counts of moose in Unit 26B, east of the Sagavanirktok River and including the Canning River. Surveys were conducted in regulatory years 1998/1999 to 2009/2010 and moose presented as adults or short yearlings (11 months old) (Lenart 2010).

The North Slope population was surveyed every two years between 2003 and 2011 by Arctic National Wildlife Refuge staff (Wald 2011). The North Slope population in Unit 26C occurs in the Coastal Plain from the Canadian border to the Canning River and from the Beaufort Sea coast to the foothills of the Brooks Range. The moose are usually concentrated in the drainages of the Sadlerochit, Hulahula, Okpilak, Okpirourak, Jago, Aichilik, Egaksrak, Ekaluakat, and the lower part of the Kongakut rivers (Wald 2011) (Map 1). Forty adults and 8 short-yearlings, were counted during the surveys conducted in April, 2011. Short-yearling composition was 17% of all moose observed in the 2011 survey. The trend counts suggest the North Slope population was relatively stable but at low numbers between 2003 and 2011 (**Figure 2**).

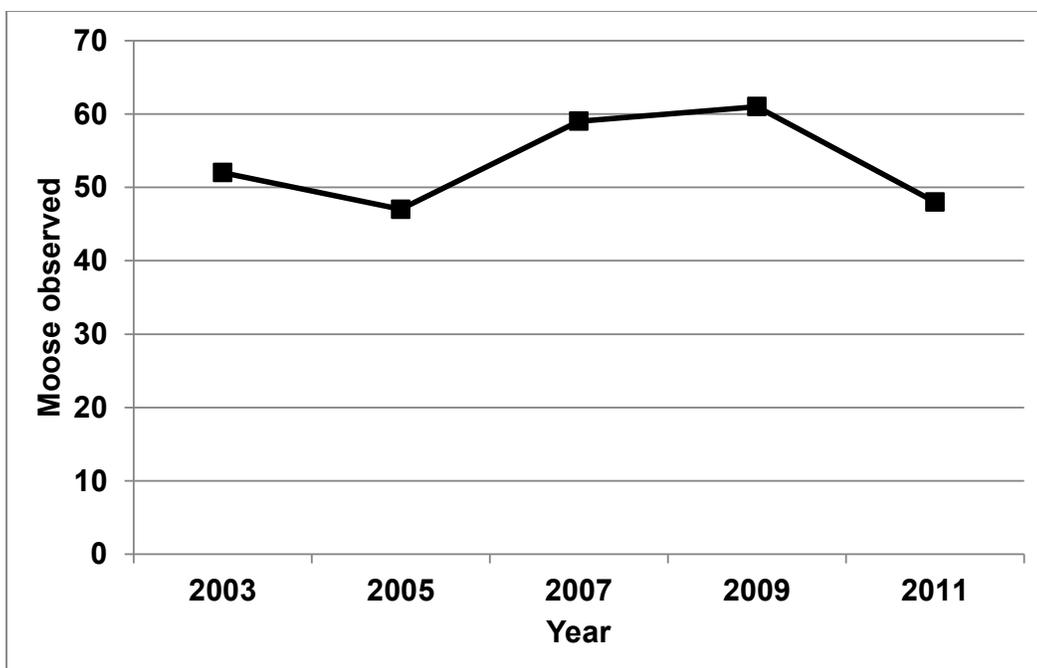


Figure 2. Moose observed during aerial surveys of trend count areas, conducted biyearly, in the Central portion of Unit 26C, 2003–2011 (Wald 2011).

The Old Crow Flats population that includes the Firth River, Mancha Creek, and Upper Kongakut River drainages in the Brooks Range was sporadically surveyed between 1991 and 2011 (**Table 1**). Based on limited survey data, the moose population in this portion of Unit 26C has fluctuated. The 2011 survey indicates the population has grown since 2000 and 2002. However, differences in the survey aircraft and flight time limit the ability to make direct comparisons between surveys conducted in 2002 and 2011 (Caikoski 2011, unpublished data). All surveys in the area have indicated a high bull to cow ratio (70–118 bulls:100 cows) (**Table 1**).

Table 1. Moose observed during aerial population composition surveys conducted in the Firth River, Mancha Creek, and upper Kongakut River drainages of Unit 26C (Caikoski 2011, unpublished data).

Year	Moose observed				Ratio (per 100 cows)	
	Cows	Calves	Bulls	Total	Calves	Bulls
1991 ^a	167	63	176	406	38	105
2000 ^a	62	22	73	157	35	118
2002 ^a	96	23	108	227	24	113
2011 ^b	169	52	118	339	31	70

^a Survey conducted by the USFWS (Buchholt 2002).

^b Survey conducted by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and differed from previous surveys in regard to search time, search area, and moose classification protocol.

The Old Crow Flats population which occur in the Firth, Coleen, Sheenjek, and upper Kongakut river drainages of the eastern Brooks Range (Units 25A and 26C) are known to be migratory (Mauer 1998; Cooley 2013, pers. comm.). These migratory moose calve and/or summer in the Old Crow Flats of the Yukon Territory in Canada and then move into the Brooks Range drainages to rut and winter. The Old Crow Flats population also includes some moose which winter in the Sheenjek and Coleen river drainages in Unit 25A. Since 2000, moose abundance declined and has remained at fairly low levels in both the Coleen and Sheenjek river area of the Old Crow Flats population (Bucholtz 2002, Mauer 2013). Mauer (1998) conducted a collared moose study (14 bulls, 43 cows) to examine migration patterns. The study determined that moose migrated from their respective winter ranges in the Firth (96%), Kongakut (86%), and Coleen (75%) river drainages, but fewer (43%) moose migrated from the Sheenjek River drainage. Most moose began moving from Old Crow Flats to wintering areas during August and early September, and moved out of winter range in late March and April (Mauer 1998). During migration, some moose moved between the Sheenjek and Coleen river drainages in Unit 25A and the Firth, Mancha, and Kongakut river drainages in Unit 26C (Mauer 1998).

An additional study was conducted in the area in 2007–2009 using satellite collars to track individual moose movements (10 bulls, 9 cows) at finer temporal and spatial scales than Mauer’s (1998) study (Cooley 2013, pers. comm.). Data analysis is not complete, but preliminary results corroborate the seasonal movements identified by Mauer (1998). The more detailed movement data provide insight into the amount of time moose spent in each drainage during winter. After the moose arrived in a drainage and the bulls went through rut, they generally the remained in the same area (Cooley 2013, pers. comm.).

Habitat

The Coastal Plain in Unit 26C is characterized by tundra intersected by rivers that flow into the Arctic Ocean. The moose population is limited by extreme weather, restricted riparian habitat along the rivers, and predation. During the winter moose are limited almost exclusively to exposed willow patches along river drainages because this is the only area where food is available (Lenart 2010).

The valleys in the Kongakut and Sheenjek drainages were carved by glaciers and are bordered by steep mountains. They differ from the Firth and Coleen valleys, which show little evidence of glaciation and are bordered by moderate slopes. The Sheenjek, Coleen, and Firth valleys are characterized by open white spruce forests (*Picea glauca*) along the sides of the valleys at the lower elevations and alpine tundra at the higher elevations. The Upper Kongakut River, which flows into the Arctic Ocean, occurs beyond the northern limits of white spruce forests. Feltleaf willow (*Salix alaxensis*) is the dominant shrub on the gravel bars and low terraces along the floodplains of the Sheenjek, Coleen, Firth, and Kongakut . In addition to feltleaf willow, there are isolated stands of balsalm poplar (*Populus balsamifera*) on the floodplains of the Kongakut. Small lakes and ponds, which are common in the lower part of the Sheejek River valley, are rare in in the Kongakut, Coleen, and Firth river valleys (Kessel and Schaller 1960, Drew and Shanks 1965, Mauer 1998).

Harvest History

Harvest quotas for North Slope moose populations which occur at low densities at the northern extent of their range, are currently determined using a 3% harvest rate (preferably bulls only) (Lenart 2013, pers com., Wald 2013, pers. com.). Moose harvest on the affected Federal public lands in Units 26B and 26C has been limited to residents of Kaktovik since 2004, with up to three permits issued annually and a harvest quota of 3 moose (2 bulls in Unit 26C and 1 moose in Unit 26B). Since 2004, 9 bull moose have been reported harvested, with an average of 1 moose harvested per year (**Table 2**). No additional moose

Table 2. Federal registration permits issued and used by residents of Kaktovik to harvest moose in Units 26B and 26C (OSM 2013, Twitchell 2013, pers. comm.). Federal public lands in Unit 26B remainder and 26C are currently closed to the harvest of moose, except by residents of Kaktovik. Up to three permits are issued annually.

Year	Permits issued	Permits used	Harvest
2004/2005	3	1	1
2005/2006	3	2	2
2006/2007	3	2	2
2007/2008	3	- ^a	- ^a
2008/2009	3	2	1
2009/2010	3	2	- ^a
2010/2011	2	1	1
2011/2012	3	2	0
2012/2013	3	2	2

^a Data not available for the report.

were taken by Kaktovik hunters in Unit 26B remainder during two week extension under Emergency Special Action WSA12-12.

Jacobsen and Wentworth (1982:43) conducted research on subsistence land use values in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Kaktovik during the late 1970s. At that time moose were harvested opportunistically by Kaktovik residents but not specifically targeted (Jacobson and Wentworth 1982:43). Moose were harvested in the 1970s primarily from January until May (Jacobson and Wentworth 1982:29). In a study conducted in 2005 and 2006 in Kaktovik by Braund (2010:150), it was noted that moose hunting was restricted by regulation and occurred from October to April, with the most hunting occurring in April. Household surveys conducted by the ADF&G Division of Subsistence estimated that Kaktovik residents harvested 4 moose in 1985, 1 in 1986, and 4 in 1992 (ADF&G 2013). Pedersen et al. (1985:57) report that Kaktovik’s annual subsistence harvest averaged five moose from 1962 to 1982. Pedersen et al. (1985:69) also estimated that 16 households (76% of households) in Kaktovik harvested moose from 1923 to 1983.

The movement of moose into the North Slope is relatively recent event and thus historically the Inupiaq in this region focused more on other large mammals in the region such as caribou, sheep, and marine mammals. (Pederson et al. 1985). Pedersen et al. (1985:70) noted that subsistence harvests in Kaktovik are not static and thus harvest levels, use areas, and temporal cycles vary from year to year and decade to decade (Pedersen et al. 1985:72). The primary moose harvest area for Kaktovik residents during the 1970s was in the Sadlerochit Valley and in the foothills along Old Man Creek, Okpilak River, and Okpirourak River. Moose, at that time, were more commonly seen along the Sadlerochit River, even at its mouth, than along the Hulahula River. Occasionally moose were seen along the Kekiktuk River and on the Sadlerochit side of Kikiktat Mountain. Moose tended to congregate in the Ignek, Ikiakpaurak and Ikiakpuk valleys, and along the Canning River between these valleys. People would make hunting trips to this area in the spring and occasionally would travel to the other side of the Canning River along the Kavik River and in the foothills near its headwaters (Jacobson and Wentworth 1982:43). Jacobson and Wentworth (1982:43)

interviewed three Kaktovik hunters who had traveled far up into the Firth River and shot two or three moose near the U.S.-Canada border.

Another subsistence use study was conducted in Kaktovik in 2005 and 2006 by Stephen R. Braund & Associates (Braund 2010). At that time, the moose hunting season had only recently been reopened the previous spring and residents needed to apply for moose permits. The use area map in Braund's report (Braund 2010:151) depicted moose harvest areas occurring around the Sadlerochit, Hulahula, and Okpilak rivers, with the highest concentration of harvests occurring along the Salerochit and Kekiktuk rivers and around Lake Schrader (Braund 2010:150).

Other Alternative(s) Considered

One alternative were considered during analysis of this proposal.

Alternative 1: The moose season for Federally qualified subsistence users would be extended from July 1 to March 31 to July 1 to June 30. The harvest quota Unit 26B remainder and Unit 26C would be 5 moose (4 antlered bulls and 1 of either sex.) provided that no more than 2 antlered bulls may be harvested from the North Slope population in Unit 26C or from Unit 26B remainder. Cows may not be harvested from Unit 26C and a cow accompanied by a calf may not be taken in unit 26B. Two to four antlered bulls may be taken from the Old Crow Flats population in the Firth, Mancha, and upper Kongakut river drainages (upstream from and including Drain Creek) for the harvest of moose in Unit 26C. The hunt will be closed in Unit 26B remainder and 26C when 5 moose have been harvested.

This alternative was not chosen because the primary hunting area for moose by the Kaktovik residents is from the North Slope moose population in Unit 26C and because subsequent surveys are needed to determine the population trend for the Old Crow Flats population. Continued cooperation between wildlife managers and biologists in Alaska and Yukon Territory should continue to occur to ensure that overharvest does not occur on this small and potentially vulnerable migratory Old Crow Flats moose population (Suitor 2013, pers. comm.)

Effects of the Proposal

If this proposal is adopted, the moose season for Federally qualified subsistence users would be extended from July 1 to March 31 to July 1 to June 30.

Typically, Kaktovik hunters harvest moose from the North Slope population in Unit 26C (Jacobson and Wentworth 1982, OSM 2013), which is closer to the village of Kaktovik than the Canning River drainage in Unit 26B or the Old Crow Flats population in eastern portion of Unit 26C. Due to the small number of moose that inhabit the Canning River drainage (Unit 26B remainder), increasing the harvest is not recommended due to conservation concerns.

The impacts of increasing the allowable harvest and extending the season in Unit 26C are difficult to determine because of the lack of current information on population size, herd composition, trend information, habitat use, and migration patterns. The North Slope moose population in Unit 26C is relatively small recovering moose population at the northern limits of their range. Additional harvest from this population could cause a conservation concern, because of the length of time required for recovery.

OSM PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

Support Proposal WP14-54 **with modification** to only allow for the extension of the harvest season from July 1 to March 31 to July 1 to June 30.

The modified regulation should read:

Unit 26B remainder and 26C—Moose

Units 26B, remainder and 26C— 1 moose by Federal registration permit by residents of Kaktovik only. The harvest quota is 3 moose (2 antlered bulls and 1 of either sex,) provided that no more than 2 antlered bulls may be harvested from Unit 26C and cows may not be harvested from Unit 26C. You may not take a cow accompanied by a calf in Unit 26B. Only 3 Federal registration permits will be issued.

July 1—~~June 30~~Mar. 31

Federal public lands are closed to the taking of moose except by a Kaktovik resident holding a Federal registration permit and hunting under these regulations.

Justification

Extending the moose season to a year-round hunt will allow subsistence users to take advantage of favorable weather and provide more opportunity to harvest moose. In addition, retaining the current quota of 3 moose (2 antlered bulls and 1 of either sex) would limit the number of moose harvested, and maintain ongoing conservation efforts for the North Slope moose population in Unit 26C.

Moose on the North Slope are at the northern limits of their range. Extreme weather conditions, restricted habitat, and predation limit the population size and increase the length of time for populations that have declined to recover. The North Slope moose population in Unit 26C which occurs on the coastal plain is a good example. Despite relatively low hunting pressure of 1 moose per year the population has remained relatively stable at approximately 50 animals for the past 12 years. The current quota of 2 antlered bulls for the North Slope portion in Unit 26C is currently slightly above the harvest recommendation of 3% for moose populations which occur in low densities at the northern extent of their range. Except for the updated population information for the Old Crow Flats population, the population dynamics of the North Slope population have not changed since the Board adopted the current regulations in 2008 (OSM 2008). The restriction for the take of adult bulls in Unit 26C and no additional harvest in Unit 26B remainder is consistent with sound management principles to conserve healthy moose populations.

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