WP14-11 Executive Summary	
General Description	Proposal WP14-11, submitted by Andy McLaughlin of Chenega Bay, requests that Unit 7, that portion that drains into Kings Bay be opened for a limited moose hunt of one bull per community (Chenega Bay, Cooper Landing, Hope, and Tatitlek) every 4 years.
Proposed Regulation	**Unit 7—Moose** *Unit 7 – that portion draining into Kings Bay.* ***Aug. 10–Sept. 20*** ***1 bull moose every four regulatory years by Federal registration permit only, issued by the Chugach National Forest Supervisor, and per community limit as follows*:** ***Chenega Bay—1 bull moose;*** ***Cooper Landing—1 bull moose;*** ***Hope—1 bull moose;*** ***Tatitlek—1 bull moose.*** *Federal public lands are closed to the harvest of moose* ***except to residents of Chenega Bay, Cooper Landing, Hope, and Tatitlek***
OSM Preliminary Conclusion	**Oppose**
Southcentral Regional Council Recommendation	
Interagency Staff Committee Comments	
ADF&G Comments	
Written Public Comments	**None**

DRAFT STAFF ANALYSIS
WP14-11

ISSUES

Proposal WP14-11, submitted by Andy McLaughlin of Chenega Bay, requests that Unit 7, that portion that drains into Kings Bay be opened for a limited moose hunt of one bull per community (Chenega Bay, Cooper Landing, Hope, and Tatitlek) every 4 years.

DISCUSSION

The proponent does not want Chenega Bay and Tatitlek residents to lose the occasional opportunity to harvest a moose in this area that their ancestors commonly used. The proponent estimates that the historical average moose harvest in Kings Bay drainage by residents of Tatitlek and Chenega Bay has been at least one bull moose every 10 years. The proponent states the presumption that the moose population is limited given that there has been no recent population survey should not be a reason for having no open season, since moose move freely into this area on an annual basis.

Community harvest limits are discussed in Federal subsistence regulations (36 CFR 242 and 50 CFR 100.6(e) and 100.26(e)(2)). They state that a community harvest system can be implemented through subpart D (general regulations) of the subsistence regulations. The community harvest limit and season will apply only to members of communities with established community harvest limits, hunting on Federal public lands in the portion of Unit 7 draining into Kings Bay. Members of these communities could take moose from other areas if they have not already taken a moose in the current regulatory year, and it would not count towards the community harvest limit.

An ANILCA Section 804 analysis is not necessary to establish the community harvest system, because the proponent is not asking the Board to limit the distribution of Federal permits. Any resident of a community would be eligible to get a Federal permit and to hunt, until 1 bull moose is taken, after which hunting would be closed to that community until the passing of 3 regulatory years.

Existing Federal Regulation

Unit 7—Moose

Unit 7 – that portion draining into Kings Bay – Public lands are closed to the taking of moose by all users	*No open season*

Federal public lands are closed to the harvest of moose.

Proposed Federal Regulation

Unit 7—Moose

Unit 7 – that portion draining into Kings Bay. ***1 bull moose every four regulatory years by Federal registration permit only, issued by the Chugach National Forest Supervisor, and per community limit as follows*****:**	***Aug. 10–Sept. 20***

Chenega Bay—1 bull moose;

Cooper Landing—1 bull moose;

Hope—1 bull moose;

Tatitlek—1 bull moose.

Federal public lands are closed to the harvest of moose ***except to residents of Chenega Bay, Cooper Landing, Hope, and Tatitlek***

Existing State Regulation

Unit 7 remainder

Residents and Nonresidents: One bull with spike on at least one side or 50-inch antlers or antlers with 4 or more brow tines on at least one side.	*Aug. 20 – Sept 20*

Extent of Federal Public Lands

Approximately 80% of the lands in Unit 7 are comprised of Federal public lands consisting of approximately 53% U.S. Forest Service (USFS) managed lands, 23% National Park Service managed lands and 2% U.S. Fish and Wildlife managed lands **(Map 1**).

Customary and Traditional Use Determinations

Residents of Chenega Bay, Tatitlek, Cooper Landing, and Hope have a customary and traditional use determination for moose in that portion of Unit 7 draining into Kings Bay.

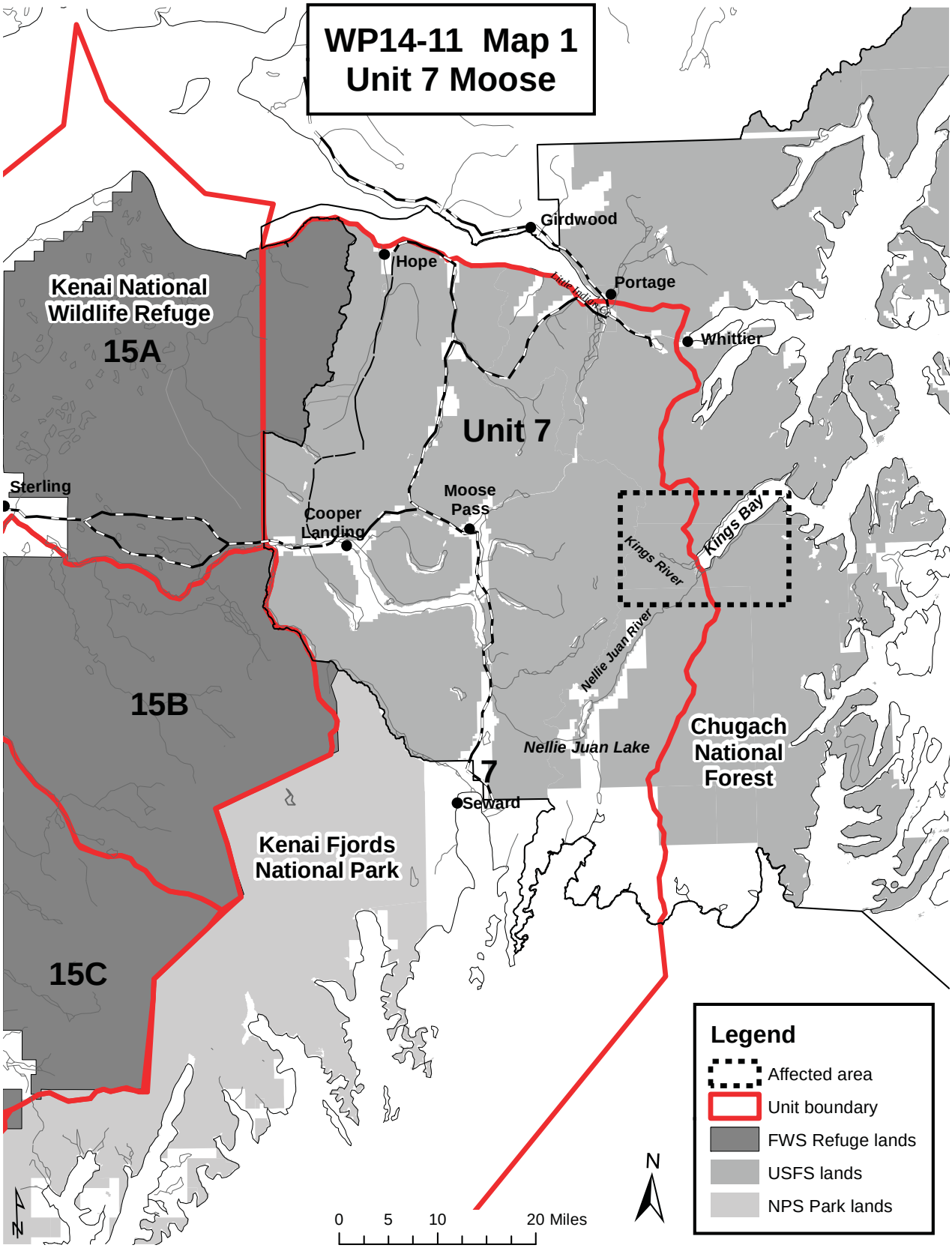
Regulatory History

Proposal P97-018b requested a positive customary and traditional use determination for Chenega Bay and Tatitlek and P97-21 requested a moose season for Federally qualified subsistence users in the portion of Unit 7 draining into Kings Bay. The harvest limit was two moose per community, which could be taken in the Kings Bay (**Map 1**), during a Sept. 1–Dec. 31 season. At its April 1997 meeting, the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) adopted P97-021 with modification to create a season from Aug. 10 – Sept. 20 with a harvest limit of 2 per community for residents of Chenega Bay and Tatitlek, with a closure to all other users (FSB 1997).

Special Action WSA01-02, submitted by the Chugach National Forest, U.S. Forest Service, requested that moose harvest in the Kings Bay drainage of Unit 7, scheduled for Aug. 10-Sept. 20, 2001, be closed. This Special Action was adopted by the Board. The Board determined that the moose population was too small to support a harvest. The Special Action lasted for one regulatory year without a proposal to continue the closure, therefore, the original Aug.10 – Sept. 20 season was re-opened.

Wildlife Closure Review 05-03 found the moose population to be at a low density and no indication that there were any increases in the population to justify harvest except by Federally qualified subsistence users.

In 2006, Proposal WP06-16 requested a season extension and harvest limit expansion. At the Mar. 14-16, 2006 Southcentral Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council meeting, the Council discussed changing the Kings Bay drainage moose harvest limit, harvest season, and removing the Federal closure. The Council voted to support WP06-16 with modifications to: Remove the antler restrictions, but retain


WP14-11 Map 1
Unit 7 Moose
Girdwood
Hope
Portage
Whittier
Kenai National
Wildlife Refuge
15A
Unit 7
Sterling
Moose
Pass
Cooper
Landing
Kings River
Kings Bay
Nellie Juan River
15B
Nellie Juan Lake
Chugach
National
Forest
7
Seward
Kenai Fjords
National Park
15C
Legend
Affected area
Unit boundary
FWS Refuge lands
USFS lands
NPS Park lands
N
0 5 10 20 Miles

the bull harvest; add a permit with a seven-day reporting requirement; change the harvest dates to Sept. 1–Dec. 31; and retain the Federal closure to non-Federally qualified subsistence users. The proponent from Chenega Bay stated they had never been restricted to harvest dates before Sept. 20, primarily because that time of year (in the early season) the moose are rarely (if at all) harvestable as the snow has not yet pushed them down from higher elevations that they normally occupy in the early fall. The proponent stated the historical moose harvests by Prince William Sound rural residents in the Kings Bay drainages did not take place until later into the winter months. The Council suggested the season change to accommodate a winter harvest, but added the permit requirements of one bull harvest and the Federal closure because the Council was concerned about the small population of moose in the area. Subsequently, the Federal Subsistence Board closed Federal lands to the hunting of moose by all users at its May 2006 meeting. The Board also rejected Proposal WP12-29 which requested a moose season in Unit 7 for that portion draining into Kings Bay in 2012 for conservation concerns.

Biological Background

The amount of moose habitat in the Kings Bay area is marginal, and consists of narrow riparian areas along the Kings River and Nellie Juan River. Severe winters with deep snow are common for this area and probably contribute to a high mortality rate and the relatively low moose densities encountered in Unit 7 (McDonough 2010). Aerial surveys in the vicinity of Kings Bay in Unit 7 were conducted during 1996-1997, 1997/1998, 1999/2000, 2001 and 2005-2006 (**Table 1)**. An aerial survey conducted by ADF&G on January 8, 1997, revealed 20 moose in the area. The herd consisted of 8 bulls, 10 cows, and 2 calves. Counting conditions were good, with heavy snow cover and excellent visibility.

Table 1. Population data from moose surveys conducted in Unit 7 in the vicinity of Nellie Juan River and Kings River which drain into Kings Bay from 1996 to 2005 (Herreman 2013).

Year	Number of Bulls	Number of Cows	Number of Calves	Total Moose	Bulls:100 Cows	Calves: 100 Cows	% Calves
1996/1997	8	10	2	20	80	20	10
1997/1998	0	1	1	15[a]	-	100	6.7
1999/2000	-	-	-	7[b]	-	-	-
2000/2001	3	3	3	9	100	100	33.3
2001/2002	4	7	1	12	57	14	8.3
2005/2006	1	-	0	5[c]	20[d]	-	-
Total	16	21	7	68			
Mean	3	3.5	1.2	11.3			

[a] Age and sex data not recorded for 14 adult moose
[b] Age and sex not recorded during survey
[c] Age and sex not recorded for 4 moose
[d] Minimum estimate

The entire drainages of the Nellie Juan and Kings Rivers were flown in March 2001 by the ADF&G, from Nellie Juan Lake downstream to the head of Kings Bay and up the Kings River to the glacial headwaters. Nine moose were counted during the survey in conditions characterized as being excellent for aerial surveying (Spraker 2001, OSM 2005). The small area of moose habitat at Kings Bay is isolated–with only one accessible route for moose to enter the area across the mountains from the Paradise Lakes or Nellie Juan Lake areas and then down the Nellie Juan River—a distance of 15 to 20 miles over difficult terrain. Interchange of moose with other areas is therefore likely minimal. The fact that only nine moose were observed is significant. Black bear have high densities in western Prince William Sound (Crowley 2002) and brown bears are regularly present in the Kings Bay area. These two predators may elevate the importance of safe calving habitat, which appears to be limited. Productivity and viability of this small group of moose, therefore, is marginal. Their restricted use area makes the remaining herd vulnerable to hunters who walk up the river valley or use authorized motorized access.

A moose index survey was flown on March 27, 2006 that was funded by the U.S. Forest Service and conducted by ADF&G Personnel, using the standard ADF&G moose survey protocol. The conditions were generally good for counting. Extra time was spent following moose tracks to try to obtain a better observation of the total moose numbers (Zemke 2006, pers. comm.; OSM 2011). A total of five moose were observed. Four moose were observed, two were seen south of the Nellie Juan River confluence with Kings Bay and two were seen in the area between the Nellie Juan River and Kings River (Zemke 2006, pers. comm; OSM 2011.). One bull moose was observed upstream in the Kings River watershed (Zemke 2006 pers. comm., OSM 2011). No calves were observed in the area. A majority of the moose tracks were observed within half mile of the shoreline. The surveyors stated that, although additional moose could be present in this heavily timbered steep country, they were relatively certain there were a very limited number of moose in the area during the survey period. The number of moose in this area during the fall would be hard to predict from this late spring survey as some moose may have migrated out of the area before heavy winter snowfall. The U.S Forest Service and ADF&G are planning for an additional moose survey in this area during the winter of 2013-1014.

Harvest History

Harvest data indicate that no moose were harvested from this area from 1997-2000 (OSM 2013). As of 2001, some hunting had occurred from the village of Tatitlek with no success (Vlasoff 2001, OSM 2005). The hunters of Chenega Bay informally discussed this hunt on May 5, 2001, concluding that they knew of no one from the Chenega Bay that had hunted the Kings Bay herd in recent years (Robertson 2001, OSM 2005).

According to the recollections of several hunters from Chenega Bay or Tatitlek, Kings Bay has been used for moose hunting by residents of these two villages at least since the 1960s. Moose harvests have taken place incidental to commercial fishing, seal hunting, or goat hunting. ADF&G Division of Subsistence studies of the old village of Chenega in the 1960s and the re-established village of Chenega Bay in the 1980s (Stratton and Chisum 1986); and of Tatitlek in the 1980s (Stratton 1990) also report that while moose harvests were not common, Kings Bay was the moose hunting location used by these villages.

The general hunt under State regulations was closed on Federal public lands in the Kings Bay drainage in 1997. The State's general hunt regulations apply to non-Federal lands in the vicinity of Nellie Juan Lake, with a harvest limit of one bull with a spike, 50-inch antlers or antlers with 4 or more brow tines on at least one side. The landowner (Chugach Corporation), however, has restricted access to the area. According to the corporation's permit specialist, no trespass permits for hunting have been issued by the corporation since 1997 (OSM 2011).

From 2000–2008, 0–2 moose have been reported harvested each year under State regulations within the Nellie Juan River drainage area (Unit 7 remainder in State regulations) which is near the Kings River drainage for a total of five moose. The 2000–2008 moose harvest was by non-Federally qualified users and the affected area is typically accessed by aircraft.

Other Alternatives Considered

An analysis based on Section 804 of ANILCA shall be conducted whenever a proposal to change Federal regulations requests a prioritization for use of a subsistence resource among rural residents having customary and traditional use determination of that resource. A section 804 analysis has the potential to limit the level of harvest to Chenega Bay and Tatitlek. Modifying the proposal to allow the harvest of one bull moose per community with customary and traditional determination could still result in a conservation concern. Residents of Cooper Landing, Hope, Chenega and Tatitlek have a customary and traditional use determination and allowing one bull moose per community every four years could result in four bulls being harvested for this small moose population in a year.

Effects of the Proposal

If this proposal is adopted, it would allow the harvest of one bull moose from Aug. 10 – Sept. 20 for the communities of Tatitlek, Chenega Bay, Cooper Landing, and Hope every 4 years. The take of 4 bull moose, from this low density moose population that use the Kings Bay drainage which is estimated to be between 5 and 20, is not sustainable. The small population, very limited habitat, and presence of both brown and black bears in the area suggest that even a limited hunt in this area could have a negative impact on this local moose population.

OSM PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

Oppose Proposal WP14-11.

Justification

There is little information on the current status of the affected moose population. Based on the 1996-1997, 2001-2002, and 2005-2006 survey results, the moose population has been at a low density and there are no indications that there have been any increases in the moose population to justify a subsistence or non-subsistence harvest. Interchange of moose with other areas is likely minimal due to the difficult terrain. Even a limited hunt of 4 bull moose every 4 years could effectively result in the loss of this local population. Therefore the continuation of this closure to hunting moose is necessary for the continued viability of this wildlife population If results from the planned U.S. Forest Service and ADF&G survey indicate a population increase the a limited hunt may be considered in the future.

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