

INTERAGENCY STAFF COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

Support Wildlife Special Action WSA19-04.

The OSM staff analysis provided a thorough and accurate evaluation of the Temporary Wildlife Apecial Action Request. The moose population in Unit 23 is in decline and there are serious concerns for its viability. Elimination of the cow moose season is necessary to address these concerns. Closing the cow season is likely to help the Unit 23 moose population recover more quickly and prevent further declines. Approval of this special action reduces opportunity for Federally qualified subsistence users to harvest cow moose. However, they will still be able to harvest bulls during the winter season under both Federal and State regulations

In 2018 the Federal Subsistence Board approved Emergency Special Action WSA18-04 with modification to close the Federal (Nov. 1 – Dec. 31, 2018) winter cow moose season and close moose hunting on public lands in Unit 23 except by Federally qualified subsistence users. Closure to non-Federally qualified users may again be warranted due to the limited harvestable surplus, to allow for continuation of subsistence uses, and to provide a priority for Federally qualified subsistence users as mandated by ANILCA. However, the Northwest Arctic Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) stated concerns at its spring 2019 meeting that a closure to non-Federally qualified users could be detrimental to Federally qualified subsistence users due to the potential for this action to concentrate non-Federally qualified users on State-managed lands in Unit 23. For this reason, the ISC is not recommending a modification to include a closure for moose hunting by non-Federally qualified users hunting on Federal public lands in Unit 23. The Board will have an opportunity to consider further action when deliberating Proposal WP20-47 which requests closure of the cow moose season and to require the use of a State registration permit (RM880) to harvest moose in Unit 23. The proposal process will allow for additional input from the public and the Council.