

STATUS OF 1999 MOOSE HARVEST REGULATIONS ISSUE

Northern Nations Summit (NNS)

Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks (MELP)

Update: March 24, 1999

NNS Concerns about northern moose harvest:

The number of licensed moose hunters in northern BC is increasing. This is leading to crowding in areas of easy access, during the hunting season. The NNS is not concerned about licensed hunters resident in northern BC, but, rather about the large influx of licensed hunters from southern BC.

The NNS objects to hunting moose for recreation, antlers or commercial reasons and do not want to see moose populations depleted for these reasons. There are too few conservation officers in the north to do anything about it. The NNS members' interest in moose is only for food. During and immediately following the rutting period, some NNS hunters prefer to take dry cow moose as the meat is more palatable than that of a bull. It normally takes two moose to feed a family of four for a year. When hunting the family's first moose, hunters will normally take the first moose they see and are more selective when taking the second moose.

The NNS has legitimate concerns about the sustainability of northern moose populations given the existing harvesting regimes. The NNS recognizes that implementing restrictions as a precautionary measure, with incomplete information is controversial, but their desire is to ensure positive, long term benefits for both First Nations and licensed hunters. The NNS urges government to err on the side of conservation for one year until the information needed to substantiate or refute the NNS concerns can be collected.

There are a number of key hunting areas to NNS FNs that require immediate protection. This protection cannot wait until we have a full scientific analysis. NNS members are also willing to voluntarily reduce their hunting efforts in these areas to ensure protection of the moose populations. The validity of the government's data for managing moose is questionable. It is incomplete, and not based on extensive periods of time in the area. NNS members live in the area and base their comments on day to day interaction with the resource.

NNS members have noticed a decrease in the number of bull moose, following the open hunting season. This decrease has been noted in the areas adjacent to roads, lakes and river systems with ready access. The NNS is concerned that there are insufficient bulls available to breed the cows in these areas and that the situation may lead to population decline. A larger than usual number of dry (unbred) cows have been observed in these areas.

Habitat deterioration is being caused by indiscriminate use of all terrain vehicles in sensitive areas.

NNS Proposal:

Implement regulatory measures to reduce the number of bull moose taken, in areas of easy access. Implement these changes as an interim precautionary measure, for one year, to ensure conservation of the northern moose populations, until better information can be collected to determine whether the populations can sustain the current harvest.

MELP Response:

MELP manages moose populations to maintain viable, sustainable populations and for the use and enjoyment of all BC residents. The first priority is conservation. After conservation needs have been met, the harvestable surplus is made available to licensed hunters in the following priority: 1) Aboriginal hunters, pursuant to aboriginal rights, 2) BC resident licensed hunters, 3) Non-resident licensed hunters. No distinction is made that provides a higher priority to BC resident licensed hunters in the region or area of

their residence, hence regulations must permit reasonable access for all BC licensed hunters and not favour any group of residents or area of the Province.

The above noted priority for providing opportunities to harvest wildlife is government policy. It provides a commitment to BC resident licensed hunters that opportunities to harvest game animals will be provided, subject only to conservation and aboriginal harvesting rights concerns. Information supporting such concerns is required to justify regulation changes to Cabinet. This information is conveyed to stakeholder groups to ensure their support before regulations proceed to the Cabinet table. Without a sound rationale and stakeholder support for reducing hunting opportunities, Cabinet approval of regulation changes is unlikely. Third party acceptance of these restrictions is expected to be greater if FN's agree to participate in the solutions proposed. Because restrictions will be limited to a small portion of the hunting season, aboriginal people may hunt year-round and have generally stated that moose during the rut are not desirable, this will consequently have minimal impact on their sustenance rights and will provide the rationale necessary to justify regulation changes to licensed hunters. The LOA (Letter of Agreement) signed by the Province of BC and the NNS clearly indicates that Treaty and Land Claim Negotiations will supersede any interim regulatory measures.

The MELP is interested in entering a long term relationship with the NNS to ensure management of moose and other wildlife in northern BC considers FN interests, and traditional and local knowledge. In addition to traditional knowledge, it is essential for long term wildlife conservation to have a process in place that gathers aboriginal harvest data to complement Hunter sample and other licensed harvest data. While it is recognized that we want to show early progress, the process and the changes that result need to be defensible from the outset to ensure that the ongoing process is respected and accepted by all parties.

The MELP takes the concerns raised by the NNS seriously, however they are required to set regulations consistent with proven moose management methods and data. If not all the changes to the hunting regulations proposed by the NNS are made this year as a result of their concerns, MELP are willing to assist in collecting information that is needed to determine what measures are necessary. MELP are committed to proposing a series of regulation changes on a one year interim basis pending the gathering of new information, including aboriginal harvest and additional moose population survey work, where funds are available.

The number of moose licensed hunters in northern BC has increased in recent years due to decreasing hunting opportunities in the southern parts of the province. The perception of the problem is exacerbated because Northern access is substantially less extensive than in the south. Because the number of licensed hunters is decreasing across the province, this trend is not expected to continue. The number of licensed moose hunters in the north can be expected to level off and then decrease slowly over time. Northern BC still has relatively few roads for the size of the area, compared to other parts of BC. This results in a concentration of vehicles along access points and corridors which is noticeable. This concentration of licensed hunters will not necessarily result in an overharvest of moose in the larger management area even though some overharvest may occur in localized areas.

Based on hunter sample information, collected annually, moose populations in the north are still only lightly hunted by licensed hunters relative to other parts of the province. Licensed hunters are limited to taking only bull moose in a three month open season and most of the harvest occurs during the rut period.

First Nations hunters are able to hunt throughout the year and take all age and sex classes of moose. The harvest of moose by First Nations hunters is unknown as is the impact of this hunting on moose populations. Preliminary modeling shows a high conservation risk if cow moose harvest is not regulated at a sustainable level by aboriginal people.

However, the limited road access continues to provide sufficient refugia to ensure population stability at this time.

For low density moose populations, as found in northern BC, it is the conservative policy of the Wildlife Harvest Strategy to maintain a proportion of bulls to cows of greater than 50 bulls to 100 cows. Bull to cow ratios have been measured using aerial inventories and have been found to exceed 50 bulls to 100 cows over the area, consistently having values of 70 or more bulls to 100 cows.

The concerns of NNS members indicate that there may be localized overharvest of bull moose in some areas of easy access. Preliminary data on radio-collared moose indicates significant movement of moose and a high likelihood of restocking heavily hunted areas. Although licensed hunter effort per kill is increasing in some areas, it is still significantly lower than other areas of the Province. Where localized high concentrations of harvest are the case, distribution of hunting pressure over a greater area can be a useful tool for regulating hunting pressure, however such efforts do pose a greater conservation risk because of decreasing population refugia. Further measures to protect habitat from damage by ATVs and other vehicles in specific problem areas may also be warranted. These data do not include age and sex specific breakdown of harvest by First Nations.

With respect to population concerns, cow harvest is the single greatest threat to the conservation of moose populations. Management throughout North America has shown that regulations that restrict bull harvest alone have little effect on overall population size and trend if there is significant calf predation or unregulated cow harvest.

There are reasons other than immediate conservation concern that support the adoption of regulatory changes for the fall '99 season.

- Over time, hunting pressure will increase due to increased regulation in other parts of the Province and Skeena moose hunting regulations will have to be restricted. The changes we implement in response to the NNS concerns are consistent with a long term approach of incremental change in response to past and anticipated increases in hunting pressure.

- ATV restrictions have been already recommended for the Klastiline Plateau, Todigan Mountain block, Tsatia Mountain block, Level Mountain block, alpine habitats on the E. side of Gnat Pass and Adsit Lake Road.

- 80% of the resident harvest in MUs 6-23 and 6-24 is taken during the period September 15 to October 15, so limited restrictions during the rut would achieve the goals of increased post rut numbers of bull moose present without significantly reducing licensed hunter opportunity.

- Moose hunting in northern BC may increase in '99 due to the new LEH restriction in the Cariboo and the SOFT strategy recently implemented in the Peace Sub-Region.

- Access closures cannot be implemented just for moose. In order to be enforceable they must be closed for hunting in general. These types of closures are normally self policing.

- Along the Highway 37 corridor, the number of licensed hunters is increasing and the KPUE (Kill per unit effort) is decreasing. The decrease in KPUE may be a rationale for instituting regulatory measures.

The restrictions around waterways will not be considered for implementation this year with the exception of the extreme southern portion of Teslin Lake. Waterway closures proposed along the Dease River and other rivers are not easily defensible to resident licensed hunters without more data. These should be deferred until more data are available. Water access will be discussed in coming years, based on information collected during the next year and subsequent years.

At present, the Yukon has less restrictions adjacent to the Alaska Highway than the Province of BC has. In terms of optics, it would be difficult to propose even more restrictive conditions on the segments of the highway within BC.

Future information that needs to be collected will include:

- FN harvest, needs and use data
- improved tooth return information and compulsory reporting for licensed hunters - methods to improve this information such as placing drop boxes at Ministry offices may provide better and more timely data.
- moose surveys planned for the Atlin and Level Mountain areas

The restrictions proposed for Region 7 will not be considered for implementation this year as restrictions are already in place to reduce moose harvest and anything in the MK has to go to the MK Board, which cannot happen in time for this year's regulations.

- The LOA has been approved and a process is in place for the Ministry to discuss wildlife issues at the policy and technical levels with the NNS.
- Through the LOA, MELP will be seeking the participation of third parties on the technical working group and in the Fall, on the joint policy committee.
- Some of the changes they have suggested have already been discussed with stakeholders and have been recommended as part of the regulations process.
- We are currently looking at several other areas where localized hunting pressure may warrant measures to spread hunting pressure more evenly through an MUs. The options we are looking at are consistent with regulations in adjacent areas.

Consensus Reached:

Northern Nations Summit members actively support and promote voluntary compliance with the regulatory measures proposed by the technical committee.

NNS technical staff will continue to identify specific, focused areas of particular concern. In the longer term, MELP and the NNS will work together to gather and share additional information needed in order to jointly design a lasting, consistent regime for moose management in northern BC.

NNS Specific Areas of Moose Hunting Concern

Tsay Keh Dene First Nation

Ingenika River

NNS Issue:

Access in this area has just been improved by a new bridge across the Ingenika. Too many LEH authorizations have been issued to control the harvest.

NNS Proposal:

Close the area to bull moose hunting during the rutting period.

MELP Response:

The LEH season has only been in place for one season and we do not have the harvest results as yet. A 30% success rate is predicted, which should produce a modest, acceptable level of harvest. Monitor the harvest for the next few years to evaluate the effectiveness of the current regulations.

Consensus Reached:

Monitor the harvest for the next few years to evaluate the effectiveness of the current regulations.

Kaska Dena First Nation

Ketchika, Turnagain, Frog, Toad River. E., Toad River W., Smith River, Kechika River (WMU 7-51, 7-54)

NNS Issue:

Jet boat and road access has led to crowding and excessive harvest of bull moose.

NNS Proposal:

Close the areas to bull moose hunting during the rutting period.

MELP Response:

In 1996, restrictive new regulations (the SOFT strategy) were implemented with the intention of reducing the harvest of bull moose. These regulations should, over time result in an increase of bulls in the populations. Monitor the harvest for the next few years to evaluate the effectiveness of the current regulations.

Consensus Reached:

Access issues will be taken to the Muskwa Ketchika Board for future changes.

The following roads and rivers off the Alaska Highway:

Smith River Road (from the Alaska Highway to Crooked Lake) (WMU 7-53)

Coal River logging road and connecting spurs south of Contact Creek (7-53), Davis Keyes mining access road from Moose Lake turnoff to Miners Peak (7-51), Moose Lake Road from Davis Keyes mining access road to Moose Lake and Moose Lake (7-51).

NNS Issue:

Hunting pressure from easy access along the Alaska Highway and side roads has resulted in an excessive harvest of bull moose.

NNS Proposal:

Close to bull moose hunting within 400 m of the road and river during the rutting period.

MELP Response:

In 1996, restrictive new regulations (the SOFT strategy) were implemented with the intention of reducing the harvest of bull moose. These regulations should, over time result in an increase of bulls in the populations. Monitor the harvest for the next few years to evaluate the effectiveness of the current regulations.

Consensus Reached:

Areas within the Muskwa Ketchika with access issues will be taken to the Muskwa Ketchika Board.

Highway 37 from Dease Lake to the Yukon border, Blue River North Road (6-23), One Ace Mountain Road, McDames Road (Good Hope Lake to McDames to Atan Lake) (Kaska and Tahltan overlap) (WMU 6-23 and 6-24)

NNS Issue:

Hunting pressure from easy access along Highway 37 and side roads has resulted in an excessive harvest of bull moose.

NNS Proposal:

KD / Tahltan joint recommendation is for a 400 m closure on either side of the highway during the rut. The Kaska Dena support voluntary closures for bull moose during the rut for their hunters.

MELP Response:

Harvest has increased and kill per unit effort has decreased in this area. These findings indicate that there may be a need to reduce the harvest. A progressive approach may be advisable. The first consideration would be to spread licensed hunter effort more evenly throughout the area using either vehicle restrictions or rut closures in the front country. Implement a single projectile, with the exception of rimfire (.22 calibre) for small game restriction within 400 m of the roads during the period Sept 25 to Oct 10.

Consensus Reached

Implement a single projectile, with the exception of rimfire (.22 calibre) for small game restriction within 400 m of the roads during the period Sept 25 to Oct 10. The Tahltan and Kaska Dena support voluntary closures for bull moose during the rut for their hunters.

Alaska Highway (Yukon border to Summit Lake) (Region 7-51, 7-52, 7-53, 7-54)

Consensus Reached

Already closed to discharge of single projectile, with the exception of rimfire (.22 calibre) for small game within 400 m year round. The Tahltan and Kaska Dena support voluntary rut closures for their hunters.

Twenty Mile Road (east of Highland River) south from Alaska Highway to Liard River (WMU 6-23), Midway Mine Road / Silvertip road (6-24).

NNS Issue:

Hunting pressure due to easy access has resulted in an excessive harvest of bull moose.

NNS Proposal:

Tahltan / KD joint recommendation is for a 400 m closure on either side of the highway during the rut. The Kaska Dena support voluntary closures for bull moose during the rut for their hunters.

MELP Response:

The first consideration would be to spread licensed hunter effort more evenly throughout the area using either vehicle restrictions or rut closures in the front country. Implement a single projectile, with the exception of rimfire (.22 calibre) for small game restriction within 400 m of the roads during the period Sept 25 to Oct 10.

Consensus Reached

Implement a single projectile, with the exception of rimfire (.22 calibre) for small game restriction within 400 m of the roads during the period Sept 25 to Oct 10. The Tahltan and Kaska Dena support voluntary closures for bull moose during the rut for their hunters.

Dease River (from French River to Blue River Reserve #2), Dease River Riparian Flats (within the 2500 m contour) from Cottonwood River to McDames Creek and from Rapid River to French River (WMU 6-23, 6-24).

NNS Issue:

Localized overharvest of moose. The Dease River riparian flats are an important traditional hunting area for the Kaska Dena. There is a concern about concentrated harvest in the Smith River area by large parties of hunters (reported to be associated with the Hells Angels organization).

NNS Proposal:

Joint proposal from Kaska / Tahltan to prohibit bull moose hunting for 400 meters on either side of the river and the described riparian flats area during the rutting period. The Kaska Dena support voluntary closures for bull moose during the rut for their hunters.

MELP Response:

Waterway closures proposed along the Dease River and other rivers are not easily defensible to resident licensed hunters without more data. These should be deferred until more data are available. Water access will be discussed in coming years, based on information collected during the next year and subsequent years. Better monitoring and cooperation with RCMP to address Smith River issues may be needed.

Consensus Reached

Implement a single projectile, with the exception of rimfire (.22 calibre) for small game restriction within 400 m of the roads during the period Sept 25 to Oct 10. The Tahltan and Kaska Dena support voluntary closures for bull moose during the rut for their hunters.. The road restriction will address some of the Dease River riparian area contained within this proposal.

Tahltan First Nation

Highway 37 from Dease Lake to Yukon border (Kaska - Tahltan overlap) - see previous description under Kaska Dena.

Adsit Trail, Todagin Mountain Mining Access Road

NNS Issue:

Localized overharvest of moose.

NNS Proposal:

Prohibit the use of motor vehicles for the purpose of hunting beyond 400 meters on either side of the road, in MU 6-19 because of the environmental issues of access to high plateau ecosystems, the restrictions would apply to all people including First Nations. The Tahltan support a voluntary bull moose rut closure for their hunters.

MELP Response:

Agreed. In addition to the motorized vehicle restriction, there would be a single projectile, with the exception of rimfire (.22 calibre) for small game restriction within 400 m of the roads during the period of Sept 25 to Oct 10. Closure of hunting bull moose within 400 m of the road may be necessary depending on number of other areas closed.

Consensus Reached

The Tahltan support voluntary compliance with the proposed regulation. Implement a single projectile, with the exception of rimfire (.22 calibre) for small game restriction within 400 m of the roads during the period Sept 25 to Oct 10.

Prohibit the use of motor vehicles for the purpose of hunting beyond 400 meters on either side of the road. The Tahltan support a voluntary rut closure for their hunters.

Jade / Boulder Road, Goldpan Road

NNS Issue:

Localized overharvest of moose. There have been past concerns of First Nations harvest by individuals from outside Tahltan traditional territory. The 400 m ban has been ineffective in the past.

NNS Proposal:

To prohibit bull moose hunting within 400 meters on either side of the road during the rut.

MELP Response:

Implement a single projectile, with the exception of rimfire (.22 calibre) for small game restriction within 400 m of the roads during the period Sept 25 to Oct 10. Prohibit the use of motor vehicles for the purpose of hunting beyond 400 meters on either side of the road.

Consensus Reached

Implement a single projectile, with the exception of rimfire (.22 calibre) for small game restriction within 400 m of the roads during the period Sept 25 to Oct 10. Prohibit the use of motor vehicles for the purpose of hunting beyond 400 meters on either side of the road. Because of the environmental significance of these areas, the restriction would apply to all people, including First Nations.

The Tahltan support a voluntary rut closure for their hunters.

Klappan River Railway Grade

NNS Issue:

This area was closed until 4 to 5 years ago and then re-opened due to enforcement concerns.

NNS Proposal:

Request an open discussion about regulatory and non-regulatory measures.

MELP Response:

Agreed

Consensus Reached

Defer discussions on this until the areas proposed for the 1999 regulations are completed.

Tsatai Mountain Block, Level Mountain Block, E. Side of Gnat Pass, Klastline River Plateau

NNS Issue:

Damage to alpine habitat by ATVs used for hunting.

NNS Proposal:

Year round, motorized vehicle closure, for the purpose of hunting, in alpine areas, above 1400 m elevation. Because of the environmental significance of these areas, the restriction would apply to all people, including First Nations.

MELP Response:

Agreed

Consensus Reached

Prohibit the use of motor vehicles for the purpose of hunting above 1400 m elevation. Because of the environmental significance of these areas, the restriction would apply to all people, including First Nations.

Pitman River (6-19)

NNS Issue:

Jet boat access has led to crowding and excessive harvest of bull moose.

NNS Proposal:

Close to bull moose hunting during the rutting season. The rut closure would apply to all people, including First Nations.

MELP Response:

Monitor use and harvest of the area. No closures in 1999. Waterway closures are not easily defensible to resident licensed hunters without more data. These should be deferred until more data are available. Water access will be discussed in coming years, based on information collected during the next year and subsequent years.

Consensus Reached

Monitor use and harvest of the area.

Barrington Burn Road (Telegraph Creek)

NNS Issue:

Potential for localized overharvest of moose because it would have been one of the only areas open during the rut restriction.

NNS Proposal:

To prohibit bull moose hunting within 400 meters on either side of the road during the rut.

MELP Response:

Implement a single projectile, with the exception of rimfire (.22 calibre) for small game restriction within 400 m of the roads during the period Sept 25 to Oct 10.

Consensus Reached

Implement a single projectile, with the exception of rimfire (.22 calibre) for small game restriction within 400 m of the roads during the period Sept 25 to Oct 10. The Tahltan support a voluntary rut closure for their hunters.

Teslin Tlingit First Nation (TTC)

Gladys Lake, Jennings Lakes, Unnamed Lake on upper Jennings River

NNS Issue:

These are primarily fly-in lakes (there are existing trails), with the main pressure from resident and non-resident licensed hunters. There is no known direct impact on TTC hunters as they do not hunt this area much or at all. Joint proposal from TTC, TRTFN and Carcross Tagish First Nation (CTFN).

MELP Response

Waterway closures along lakes and rivers are not easily defensible to resident licensed hunters without more data. These should be deferred until more data are

available. Water access will be discussed in coming years, based on information collected during the next year and subsequent years.

Consensus Reached:

MELP has provided harvest data, guide outfitter quotas and guide area map.

Teslin Lake

NNS Issue:

There is good access to this area by boat, from the Yukon. Teslin Tlingit citizens have permanent traditional camps, but licensed BC licensed hunters are occupying all the campsites through the entire fall hunting season. It is impossible for TTC citizens to use their traditional campsites during that period.

Hunters land their boats at Johnstown village and hunt across Indian reserve lands, including graveyards and other important FN sites.

Following the hunting season, cow and calf moose can be found in this area, but no bulls. Because of this, FN hunters take cow moose following the open season, when they might take a bull if they were available. There is concern that this will result in an excessive cow moose harvest, causing population decline.

TTC citizens have limited access on Teslin Lake during freeze-up and break-up as well as during stormy periods. Information provided in FN elders statements (Mar 19, 1999 handout) shows that TTC citizens are experiencing increasing difficulty in meeting their sustenance and ceremonial needs for moose.

NNS Proposal:

Close to bull moose hunting during the rutting season from September 19 to October 16, within 400M of the shore of the south end of Teslin Lake (south of the north shore of Shaman Island and including Shaman Island to the southern inlet of Teslin Lake).

TTC citizens will voluntarily not hunt for moose during the same rutting period in this area, except where a moose is needed for ceremonial purposes. Signage of important sites may be considered to help prevent hunting and camping on private lands and culturally important sites.

MELP Response:

Bulls may not be present in the lower lying areas of easy access following the open hunting season, for two reasons. First, the bulls close to access points will either have been taken by hunters or they would have fled the area to escape hunters. Secondly, following the rutting period, bulls naturally move to higher ground, while the cows and calves stay to the lower ground. The lack of bulls in easily accessed, low lying areas does not necessarily present a conservation concern. Moose are a wide ranging species and our data shows that there is a sufficient number of bull moose in the area to breed the cows.

Harvest has increased and kill per unit effort has decreased in this area. These findings indicate that there may be a need to reduce the harvest. A progressive approach may be advisable. The first consideration would be to spread licensed hunter effort more evenly throughout the area using either vehicle restrictions or rut closures in the front country. A single projectile, with the exception of rimfire (.22 calibre) for small game restriction within 400 m of the shore in the southernmost portion of Teslin Lake should be implemented between Sept 25 and Oct 10.

Rut closures are not appropriate for dealing with trespass issues. Trespass by licensed hunters on village and reserve lands should be dealt with using the Trespass Act or other relevant statutes. A note should be put in the Hunting

regulations brochure, reminding licensed hunters that reserves are private land and must be respected as such.

Consensus Reached:

A single projectile, with the exception of rimfire (.22 calibre) for small game, restriction within 400 m of the shore in the southernmost portion of Teslin Lake (south of the north shore of Shaman Island and including Shaman Island to the southern inlet of Teslin Lake) be implemented between Sept 25 and Oct 10. The TTC supports a voluntary rut closure for their citizens.

Alaska Highway (MU 6-25 portion), Smart River Road and Log Jam Creek Road, Swift River (from Swift Lake upstream to the Yukon boundary)

NNS Issue:

There is good access to this area along the highway and by ATVs and 4 wheel drive vehicles off the highway.

Following the hunting season, cow and calf moose can be found in this area, but no bulls. Because of this, FN hunters take cow moose following the open season, when they might take a bull if they were available. There is concern that this will result in an excessive cow moose harvest, causing population decline.

Information provided in FN elders statements (Mar 19, 1999 handout) shows that TTC citizens are experiencing increasing difficulty in meeting their sustenance and ceremonial needs for moose.

NNS Proposal:

Close to moose hunting during the rutting season from September 19 to October 16, within 400M of the roads and river.

TTC citizens will voluntarily not hunt for moose during the same rutting period in this area, except where a moose is needed for ceremonial purposes.

MELP Response:

Bulls may not be present in the lower lying areas of easy access following the open hunting season, for two reasons. First, the bulls close to access points will either have been taken by hunters or they would have fled the area to escape hunters. Secondly, following the rutting period, bulls naturally move to higher ground. The lack of bulls in easily accessed, low lying areas does not necessarily present a conservation concern. Moose are a wide ranging species and our data shows that there is a sufficient number of bull moose in the area to breed the cows.

The proposal represents a very major impact to resident licensed hunters without a compelling conservation or aboriginal rights rationale to support it. It eliminates all ready access to the Alaska Highway area in WMU 6-25. Resident licensed hunters use the area only during the 3 month fall hunting period, leaving exclusive hunting access to FN hunters for the remainder of the year.

Harvest has increased and kill per unit effort has decreased in this area. These findings indicate that there may be a need to reduce the harvest. A progressive approach may be advisable. The first consideration would be to spread hunter effort more evenly throughout the area using either vehicle restrictions or rut closures in the front country. A single projectile, with the exception of rimfire (.22 calibre) for small game restriction within 400 m of the roads during the Sept 25 to Oct 10 period is proposed.

Waterway closures along lakes and rivers are not easily defensible to resident licensed hunters without more data. These should be deferred until more data are available. Water access will be discussed in coming years, based on information collected during the next year and subsequent years.

Consensus Reached:

A single projectile, with the exception of rimfire (.22 calibre) for small game, restriction within 400 m of the roads be implemented between Sept 25 and Oct 10. The TTC supports a voluntary rut closure for their citizens.

Taku River Tlingit First Nation / C\TFN (Carcross \ Tagish First Nation

Gladys Lake Road and Gladys Lake

NNS Issue:

There is good access to this area by trail and it is a particularly important area for moose during the rut period. Following the hunting season, cow and calf moose can be found in this area, but no bulls. There is concern that there are too few bulls to breed the cow moose. This concern is strengthened by the large number of dry cows that are observed.

NNS Proposal:

Close the Gladys Lake trail to access during the rutting season. TRTFN and C\TFN members will voluntarily not hunt for moose during the same rutting period in this area, except where a moose is needed for ceremonial purposes.

MELP Response

Close access to motorized access during the period of Sept 25 to Oct 10.

Consensus

Close access to motorized access during the period of Sept 25 to Oct 10. The TRTFN and C\TFN support voluntary compliance for their citizens.

Atlin Lake and roads to the east of Atlin Lake

NNS Issue:

There is good access to this area by boat, from the Yukon and along roads to the East of Atlin Lake.

Following the hunting season, cow and calf moose can be found in this area, but no bulls. There is concern that there are too few bulls to breed the cow moose. This concern is strengthened by the large number of dry cows that are observed.

Damage to riparian habitat by ATVs is common in the watersheds adjacent to Atlin Lake.

NNS Proposal:

Close to moose hunting during the rutting season from September 15 to October 15, within 400M of the shore of Atlin Lake and within 400 meters of the roads on the east side of the lake.

TRTFN and C\TFN members will voluntarily not hunt for bull moose during the same rutting period in this area, except where a moose is needed for ceremonial purposes.

MELP Response:

Bulls may not be present in the lower lying areas of easy access following the open hunting season, for two reasons. First, the bulls close to access points will either have been taken by hunters or they would have fled the area to escape hunters. Secondly, following the rutting period, bulls naturally move to higher ground. The lack of bulls in easily accessed, low lying areas does not necessarily present a conservation concern. Moose are a wide ranging species and our data shows that there is a sufficient number of bull moose in the area to breed the cows.

Information that shows that FN communities are unable to meet their sustenance and ceremonial needs for moose needs to be gathered as part of future documentation.

The proposal represents a very major impact to resident licensed hunters without a compelling conservation or aboriginal rights rationale to support it. It eliminates all ready access to Atlin Lake and surrounding area. Resident licensed hunters use the area only during the 3 month fall hunting period, leaving exclusive hunting access to FN hunters for the remainder of the year. Licensed hunter numbers have been decreasing in this area.

Harvest has increased and kill per unit effort has decreased in this area. These findings indicate that there may be a need to reduce the harvest. A progressive approach may be advisable. The first consideration would be to spread hunter effort more evenly throughout the area using either vehicle restrictions or rut closures in the front country. In the Atlin area, the number of hunters, the harvest and KPUE are all down in the last few years.

There has been a long term problem with habitat damage by ATVs in watersheds East of Atlin Lake. More work is needed to get a good handle on the areas that should be closed for habitat reasons. Snowmobiles are used by licensed hunters during the late part of the season. If this opportunity becomes more widely known, there may be a need to reduce or eliminate either the later season or access by snowmobiles. As an interim measure, a single projectile, with the exception of rimfire (.22 calibre) for small game restriction within 400 m of the roads between Sept 25 and Oct 10 is proposed.

Waterway closures along lakes and rivers are not easily defensible to resident licensed hunters without more data. These should be deferred until more data are available. Water access will be discussed in coming years, based on information collected during the next year and subsequent years.

Consensus Reached:

A single projectile, with the exception of rimfire (.22 calibre) for small game, restriction within 400 m of the roads be implemented between Sept 25 and Oct 10. The TTC and CTFN supports a voluntary rut closure for their citizens.

The following roads in the Atlin area: Main Surprise Lake Road, Bull Creek Road (Blue Canyon), Warm Bay (O'Donnell Road).

NNS Issue:

There is good access to this area by ATVs and 4 wheel drive vehicles.

Following the hunting season, cow and calf moose can be found in this area, but few bulls. Because of this, FN hunters take cow moose following the open season, when they might take a bull if they were available. There is concern that this will result in an excessive cow moose harvest, causing population decline. Damage to riparian habitat by ATVs is common in the watershed.

NNS Proposal:

Close to moose hunting during the rutting season, within 400M of the roads. TRTFN and CVTFN citizens will voluntarily will not hunt for moose during the same rutting period in this area, except where a moose is needed for ceremonial purposes.

MELP Response:

As an interim measure, a single projectile, with the exception of rimfire (.22 calibre) for small game restriction within 400 m of the roads between Sept 25 and Oct 10 is proposed.

Waterway closures along lakes and rivers are not easily defensible to resident licensed hunters without more data. These should be deferred until more data are available. Water access will be discussed in coming years, based on information collected during the next year and subsequent years.

Consensus:

A single projectile, with the exception of rimfire (.22 calibre) for small game, restriction within 400 m of the roads be implemented between Sept 25 and Oct 10. The TTC and CVTFN supports a voluntary rut closure for their citizens.

Taku River (MU 6-27), Taku Arm, Graham's Inlet

NNS Issue:

There is access to this area by boat from the Yukon and Atlin River. Access on the Taku River from Alaska is a concern. Following the hunting season, cow and calf moose can be found in this area, but few bulls. There is concern that there are too few bulls to breed the cow moose. This concern is strengthened by the large number of dry cows that are observed.

Damage to riparian habitat by ATVs is common in the watersheds adjacent to Atlin Lake.

NNS Proposal:

Close to moose hunting during the rutting, within 400M of the shore of Atlin Lake.

TRTFN and CVTFN members will voluntarily not hunt for moose during the same rutting period in this area, except where a moose is needed for ceremonial purposes.

MELP Response:

There are insufficient data at this time to justify waterway closures for moose hunting in the more remote areas of this management unit. Monitor use and harvest along the waterways.

Waterway closures along lakes and rivers are not easily defensible to resident licensed hunters without more data. These should be deferred until more data are available. Water access will be discussed in coming years, based on information collected during the next year and subsequent years.

Consensus

Monitor use and harvest.