

**The Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board**

**Moose Harvest Management Framework**

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**Version 2**

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## 1.0 Introduction

Moose are an important component of the Yukon's cultural and environmental landscape. Many Yukoners rely on moose as an important part of their diet. Increased development and growing human populations require creative management approaches so that moose are available for future generations to enjoy.

In response to a recommendation from the 1998 Renewable Resources Councils Annual General Meeting, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board (Board) established the Moose Harvest Management Working Group. The Working Group was mandated to consult with the public and to make recommendations on how and under what conditions moose harvest should be managed throughout the territory. It consisted of members from the Board, Renewable Resources Councils, Council for Yukon First Nations, Yukon Fish and Game Association, and the Yukon government.

The Working Group developed a set of principles to guide moose harvest management and then identified a number of issues and a range of options or "tools" that might be used in moose harvest management. The result of this work was the 2002 Moose Harvest Framework document. The 2002 document describes the consultation process, participants, considerations, and tools that the working group reviewed. As a result of the recommendations associated with the 2002 Framework, permit hunts have been the tool most commonly used to limit harvest for conservation reasons.

In 2018, the YFWMB and Yukon government established a new Moose Working Group to address emergent challenges related to moose harvest. These include harvest levels that are at or above sustainable limits in many areas and the challenge of harvest pressure distribution. In January 2019 Environment Yukon reached out to Renewable Resources Councils and First Nation Lands Directors with information about these challenges, indicating that the "tool box" would likely be part of the coming conversation. Many communities have begun discussing moose harvester management, and looking to the Framework for guidance about managing moose harvesters.

The YFWMB recognizes that the 2002 document is dated and in need of revision. This document you are reading is an abbreviated version of the 2002 document. It focuses on the principles and tools, and is the starting point for a revised version. The Moose Working Group Board invites you to provide comments, including any new tools you would like to see added, by October 31, 2019. The Working Group will make best efforts to have a revised, updated draft document ready by mid-November. This revised document will be subject to more focused consultation in February, 2020.

Until a new Framework for Managing Moose Harvesters is finalized, and while community-level discussions about moose harvesting continue, the Working Group encourages Yukoners to view the 2002 document as a guideline to inform discussions.

In revising the document, our intention is not to preclude the development of other harvest management tools in the future, but to provide a basic “toolbox” of options that can be used to deal with moose harvest management issues in a coherent, consistent way.

**Table 1. Principles of Moose Harvest Management in the Yukon**

1. **Conservation** of moose populations, and their habitats, and the maintenance of ecosystem biodiversity is the overriding moose management principle.
2. **Sustainable harvest and utilization** will be achieved primarily through the management and regulation of hunters acknowledging the presence of other natural forces regulating moose numbers.
3. **The development and application** of the harvest management framework shall be guided by the combined knowledge of local peoples, resident hunters, registered Yukon outfitters, First Nations' people and wildlife managers.
4. **Harvest sharing and allocation** provisions should provide moose harvesting opportunities for all Yukoners while respecting First Nation needs for fish and wildlife and their 16.4.2 rights to harvest. When harvesting opportunities are to be limited for reasons of conservation, priority and sharing formulas shall be in accordance with the First Nation Final Agreements.
5. **Harvest information** for all hunters that is accurate and verifiable and available in a timely annual basis is **essential** for effective management.
6. **Equitable access** for all licensed resident hunters should be provided for by clear, fair and consistent consideration and application of access provisions throughout the territory.
7. **Hunting regulations** should be simple, easily understood and applied consistently throughout the territory, to the extent possible. They must be responsive to local and Yukon-wide management issues or concerns and in accordance with Final Agreements. Regulations that restrict hunting must have a clear rationale for implementation together with management objectives. A mechanism must be in place for easily lifting the regulation after the management objective has been met.
8. **Harvest management administration systems** should be cost effective, non-intrusive and, to the extent possible, applied uniformly across the territory and in accordance with Yukon First Nation Final Agreements.
9. **Public education**, where possible and appropriate, should be considered a first step prior to the introduction of regulation and enforcement.
10. **Hunting opportunities** should be maintained and enhanced where possible.
11. **The negative impacts of displacement of hunter effort and harvest** should be considered in the development of harvest management systems and regulations. Unplanned displacement should be avoided to the extent possible taking into consideration conservation concerns and the interests of affected harvesters.
12. **The interests of other wildlife users** will be recognized in the management and allocation of moose.

13. **Hunting is recognized to be a valuable, legitimate use of wildlife in Yukon.** Of long-standing importance, this principle must be considered in the development of any initiative or regulations.

## **2.0 Harvest Management Tools**

The following series of harvest management options is loosely ordered from least aggressive to most aggressive, in terms of restrictiveness on hunters and hunting opportunities. Management authorities are encouraged to use the least aggressive and least restrictive harvest management tool possible when dealing with specific management harvest issues.

### **2.1 Public Education**

#### **What is it?**

Public education, as it relates to moose harvest management, is any form of advertising or information distribution system of process used to educate people and/or modify their behavior to achieve a management objective. It includes, but is not limited to, things like the Hunter Education and Ethics Development (HEED) program, school programs, highway signs, radio commercials and brochures.

#### **When would it be used?**

Education can be used whenever there is a desire to either re-enforce people's current behavior or modify it to achieve a management objective. Education can be used as a universal management tool to reach all hunters. It can be used:

- Educate first time hunters and others on hunter ethics, proper etiquette, hunting techniques and meat handling (HEED program)
- As a first approach, before regulations, to reduce harvest (e.g. Voluntary no-hunting)
- Help direct or re-direct hunting pressure
- Provide local benefits for communities

#### **Issues to Consider**

There are a number of things to keep in mind when considering education as a harvest management tool.

- While education can be an effective means of modifying the behavior of most hunters, it is unlikely that there will be 100 per cent compliance. Some people will refuse to comply if regulations and penalties are not in place.
- The lack of compliance by some may create hard feelings in the communities
- The message and the means of distributing the message (e.g. signs) must be designed for the specific target audience. In most cases, several means of distributing the message will likely be needed.
- Local RRCs must be strongly involved in identifying the objectives and developing the message

**What the 2002 Working Group Heard:**

There was broad public support in most communities for using public education as a harvest management tool. Most people felt that education should be used instead of regulations whenever appropriate. Some people were, however, concerned that not everyone would comply. This could result in bad feelings between those who were trying to “do the right thing” and those who were not.

Most people expressed strong support for the current HEED program and felt that all first-time hunters should be required to take a hunter education program.

## **2.2 Harvest Information Reporting**

### **What is it?**

This is information from both licensed and First Nations Hunters on the number and location of animals killed on an annual basis.

### **When would it be used?**

Harvest information is used on an ongoing basis to establish allowable harvest rates and to assess whether current rates are within sustainable limits. It is the cheapest and most valuable form of moose management information available.

### **Issues to Consider:**

- Most First Nations harvest information is currently unavailable, which means overall harvest data is incomplete.
- Trust is a crucial element of the harvest-monitoring program.

### **What the 2002 Working Group Heard:**

While some First Nations expressed concerns about reporting their harvest, the need for accurate and complete harvest information was generally recognized.

## **2.3 Special Guiding Licenses for Residents**

### **What is it?**

Each year a specified number of Special Guiding Licenses are available to Yukoners to take a Canadian non-Yukon resident hunting, but they cannot be paid for their services.

### **When would it be used?**

Most people use the special guiding licenses to take friends or relatives hunting. These licenses are available on a first-come first-served basis. Individuals are eligible to get one of the licenses once every three years to hunt moose and other species as allowed for in regulations. They are not available in permit hunt areas.

### **Issues to Consider**

- About one quarter of non-residents guided for moose under special guiding licenses are successful in taking a moose

### **What the 2002 Working Group Heard:**

No opposition to the current special guiding license system was expressed at the community meetings. There was a mixture of opinion on whether Yukon residents acting as special guides should forfeit his/her hunting privileges for the species hunted.

## **2.4 Group Hunting**

### **What is it?**

A group hunt is when two or more people get together and all have their names on one moose tag or hunt permit. That means the group can only take one moose but anyone in the group can shoot it. This is currently illegal in the Yukon.

### **When would it be used?**

It can be used when many people want hunting opportunities but it is necessary to limit the number of moose taken, such as in areas under a permit hunt system.

### **Issues to Consider**

- This approach only works well for small groups (2-4 people)
- Administering group hunting requirements is very complicated and time consuming.
- Group hunting would require more regulations and enforcement.

### **What the 2002 Working Group Heard:**

A majority of communities expressed some degree of support for the concept of group hunts although views on how and when it might be used varied considerably.

## 2.5 License and Seal Fees

### **What is it?**

These are the fees hunters pay for a hunting license and species tags.

### **When and why would it be used?**

License and tag fees are currently used to help offset administration costs and to recognize the value of wildlife.

Varying fees could also be used to direct hunting pressure by charging more to hunt in some areas than others. Fees in areas where there is a conservation concern, such as around communities and easily accessible areas could be set higher than those in more remote areas.

### **Issues to Consider**

- Increasing license and tag fees would impact individuals of low income.
- Having different licensing fees for different areas would be difficult to administer and enforce. It would also be contrary to the principle of keeping the regulations simple, as laid out in the discussion paper.

### **What the 2002 Working Group Heard:**

There was no community support for using license and seal fees as a management tool.

## **2.6 Age, Sex and Antler Restrictions**

### **What is it?**

Although this topic potentially includes issues such as the harvesting of cow and calf moose, the discussion at community meetings was limited to the merits of harvest restrictions like the “spike-fork-50” rule used in some areas of Alaska, where hunters can only legally take a moose that either has spike or fork antlers or one that has an antler spread of at least 50 inches. A similar system called the “tri-palm” rule is used in parts of British Columbia.

### **When would it be used?**

This type of regulation is used in areas receiving intense hunting pressure where there is a concern that the harvest will exceed the allowable limit. The intent is to lower the hunter success rate to ensure that the harvest does not exceed the allowable limit while allowing anyone who wants to hunt in the area.

### **Issues to Consider**

- This type of regulation would maximize hunting opportunities while helping to ensure that the harvest remains within allowable limits.
- It may be difficult for hunters to identify which moose are legal. This may result in meat wastage if an illegal moose is accidentally taken.
- Enforcing this type of regulation may be difficult given antlers are not required within the current biological submission protocols in Yukon.

### **What the 2002 Working Group Heard:**

Comments for and against this type of harvest restriction were more or less evenly split.

## 2.7 Primitive Weapons

### What is it?

These are short-range weapons like long bow and black powder rifles.

### When would it be used?

They could be used when there is a desire to maintain or enhance hunting opportunities but limit harvest, or in areas where using high powered rifles poses a safety concern. It could also be used to provide additional, special hunting opportunities to primitive weapons enthusiasts.

### Issues to Consider

- Because of their short range, these weapons tend to be safer to use around populated areas.
- Bows and black powder weapons tend to be less effective than high-powered rifles and may result in higher crippling losses.
- Hunters are already allowed to use these weapons but few do.

### What the Working Group Heard and Recommendations

Most comments at the community meetings favored the status quo.

## 2.8 Season Length and Timing

### What is it?

Modifying season length and/or timing to either increase or decrease hunting opportunities and harvest.

### When would it be used?

Modifying season length and/or timing can be used in a number of ways to increase or decrease hunting opportunities and harvest, and to modify harvest around times when moose are not in the rut. Shorter seasons will generally reduce hunting opportunities and hunter success. For example, eliminating hunting during the rut will likely result in a reduction in the harvest. This may be an option to reduce harvest but maintain hunting opportunities.

### Issues to Consider

- Longer seasons mean that animals are harassed for a longer time.
- Identifying male and female moose become difficult after the antlers drop off.
- Alternate or longer hunting season might reduce hunting pressure and hunter congestion during the rut.
- Shortening the hunting season would likely increase hunter congestion.
- Eliminating hunting during the rut would likely result in a large reduction in the harvest.

### What the 2002 Working Group Heard:

Support for and opposition to using season length and timing as a harvest management tool was more or less evenly split in the communities.

## 2.9 “No-Hunting Corridors”

### **What is it?**

These are areas along access corridors, usually defined by a distance off a road or river, where hunting of certain species is prohibited or there is a complete ban on firing guns.

### **When would it be used?**

Corridors can be used to address safety concerns in areas with high hunter density or to deal with high harvest rates adjacent to a road or river.

### **Issues to Consider**

- Corridors can make it difficult for elders and others with limited mobility to hunt.
- Corridors may just displace the problem by a few hundred meters.
- Corridors reduce access to legitimate and sustainable hunting opportunities.
- Corridors can result in increased ORV access in areas otherwise undisturbed.

### **What the 2002 Working Group Heard:**

- Throughout their meetings, the Working Group heard a wide diversity of opinions related to no hunting corridors, often within the same community.

## **2.10 Priority Access to Hunting Opportunities for Trappers**

### **What is it?**

Throughout most of the Yukon, trappers are permitted to take one moose for food from their trap line during an extended season that runs from November 1 to January 31. In areas under a permit hunt authorization system, they must apply for and receive a permit before they can hunt on their trapline.

### **When would it be used?**

Priority access by trappers to permits would only apply in areas under a permit hunt system or other similar hunting restrictions.

### **Issues to Consider**

- Giving permits to trappers would reduce the number of permits available to issue to other hunters through the permit draw system. In fact, giving one permit to a trapper may reduce the number available to others by as much as three permits. This is because a trapper is very likely to take a moose during his 184-day season. The number of permits issued is usually two to three times higher than the maximum allowable annual moose harvest for an area because only between one third and one half of other hunters are successful during the standard 92-day season.
- Simply giving a trapper one of a limited number of permits could be considered “local preference”.
- Many trappers no longer live a subsistence lifestyle, so taking a moose off of their trapline in the extended season may not be necessary.
- Harvesting a moose on the trapline by a local trapper could also net the trapper use of the non-edible by products of that moose for trapping purposes.
- Trappers indicated that they would prefer to be just given a permit to hunt on their trapline each year.

### **What the 2002 Working Group Heard:**

A diversity of opinion related to this topic was expressed in the communities but some level of support for dealing with this issue on a case by case basis was expressed in 7 of 12 communities.

## 2.11 Local Hunting Opportunities

### **What is it?**

Any moose management initiatives or hunting approaches that directly or indirectly favor a local hunter or community over a hunter from another community or location in the Yukon.

### **When would it be used?**

When there is a conservation concern and local hunters are losing opportunities because of increased use by hunters from other areas.

### **Issues to Consider**

- Anything that obviously gives someone more hunting opportunities simply because they are a local resident will not be politically or legally acceptable.
- A definition of “local” is difficult. How do you define area boundaries?
- Could result in displacement of hunters into other communities.

### **What the 2002 Working Group Heard:**

This topic received by far the most discussion during the community meetings. There was support for using “subtle” regulations such as mid-week hunts to provide for local preference to hunting opportunities.

## 2.12 Registration Hunts

### What is it?

Registration hunts generally require that the hunter register and receive a hunt authorization immediately before starting his/her hunt in a specified area. Registration hunt authorizations are generally valid for a limited period, usually one to two weeks, but could be for any length up to the full moose hunting season. In all cases, hunters are required to report their harvest in the specified area quickly, usually within 48-76 hours. Moose hunting in the specified area is closed for the season and all outstanding permits revoked as soon as the maximum annual allowable harvest has been reached. This system has been used in Yukon and is currently being used in Alaska.

There are a number of variations on how registration hunts can be set up. In the most liberal scenario, there would be no limit on the number of permits issued thus maximizing hunting opportunities. Under this system, however, it would be important that the reporting period be very short (24 hours) to ensure that the allowable harvest is not exceeded. Alternatively, the number of permits issued at any one time could be limited. In this case reporting restrictions could be more relaxed.

### When would it be used?

Similar to permit hunts, registration hunts are used primarily when hunting pressure is high and there is concern that the harvest may exceed the allowable limit. This typically happens around communities and in other easily accessible areas. Registration hunts help ensure that the moose harvest does not exceed the allowable limit.

Registration hunts could also be used to limit the number of hunters afield to deal with safety concerns or to improve hunt quality.

### Issues to Consider

- Depending on how the system is designed, registration hunts may maximize hunting opportunities while providing some assurance that the harvest does not exceed the allowable limit.
- Registration hunts may result in a “moose rush” where hunters go out early in the season to avoid being disappointed if the season is closed because the allowable harvest is reached.
- The harvest reporting requirement allow the hunter a reasonable amount of time to report their harvest but be short enough to ensure that allowable harvest is not exceeded.
- Registration hunts can be costly to administer.
- Registration hunts are often closed prior to the rut, improving meat quality.

**What the 2002 Working Group Heard:**

There was widespread support for using registration hunts to manage moose harvest when there is a demonstrated conservation concern, or a local preference for their utilization. Preference for registration hunts over permits hunts was expressed at several community meetings.

## 2.13 Permit Hunts

### What is it?

Hunting opportunities in a specified area are limited to those with a permit hunt authorization (PHA). Hunters pay a fee to have their names included in a random draw for a limited number of these PHAs. The current computer draw system is weighted to favor those who applied for but were unsuccessful in the previous year's draw. Licensed resident hunting opportunities are limited to the number of permits issued.

Permits are normally issued to hunt in the specified area for the entire moose hunting season but they could be issued for some shorter portion of the season. Issuing permits for only portions of the season would allow more permits to be issued to cover the entire season and therefore increase hunting opportunities in the area.

Historically in the Yukon, only about one third of moose PHA holders are successful. The number of permits to be issued is therefore generally determined by multiplying the maximum acceptable moose harvest by licensed residents by three.

### When would it be used?

Permit hunts are most commonly used when hunting pressure is high and there is concern that the harvest may be unsustainable. This typically happens around communities and in other easily accessible areas. Permit hunts ensure that moose populations are not overhunted.

Permit hunts could also be used to limit the number of hunters afield to deal with safety concerns or to improve hunt quality.

### Issues to Consider

- Permit hunts are restrictive. They require the hunter to plan his/her hunt well in advance and pay to enter a lottery draw with no assurance that they will get a permit for the area they wish to hunt in. If they are lucky enough to receive a permit but their plans change, the permit may go unused. Hunting opportunities are limited to the number of permits issued.
- Residents of Whitehorse often receive a large proportion of the permits issued because 65% of Yukon hunters and people applying for permit hunts live in Whitehorse. Residents of smaller communities often resent the influx of hunters from elsewhere when hunting opportunities are restricted.

### What the Working Group Heard:

Some level of support for the continued use of the permit hunt system was expressed at nine of twelve community meetings. There was, however, public mistrust of the current permit draw system.

## 2.14 Rotational Refuges

### What is it?

These are areas that might be closed for a set period of time (a year or more) in order to allow the moose populations to rebuild and to protect genetic diversity. This is a traditional harvest management method used by Yukon First Nations.

### When would it be used?

Rotational refuges would be used to eliminate harvest in an area of conservation concern for a predetermined number of years. The area would then be reopened for hunting. It is a way to let local moose populations increase or maintain themselves while hunting continues nearby.

### Issues to Consider

- Criteria for where, when, and for how long temporary refuges would be established needs to be developed and agreed upon.
- Numerous small refuges might displace too many hunters into other areas of concern
- Rotational refuges might be confusing for hunters
- Rotational refuges might affect outfitter quotas
- There is no evidence that genetic diversity of moose is being affected by current levels of harvest in Yukon or that it would be improved through the use of rotational refuges

### What the 2002 Working Group Heard:

A great deal of uncertainty about rotational refuges was expressed at the community meetings: how big would they be, who would impose them, who would be affected, how they would be administered, etc. Answers to many of these questions still have to be worked out. Those supporting the concept spoke of their value in dealing with local issues. Those opposed said they would be confusing for hunters, that they may just displace hunters into other areas of concern, and that they would be difficult to manage and administer.

## 2.15 Hunting Closures

### What is it?

This is when all licensed hunting in a defined area is prohibited.

### When would it be used?

Closures are used to help depressed or declining moose populations recover by removing all licensed harvest.

### Issues to Consider

- Closures eliminate all hunting opportunities in the area and force licensed hunters to move to other areas. This may create conservation concerns in those areas.
- Closures may have a significant negative impact on hunters in adjacent communities.
- Closures are most effective when **all** hunting, including First Nations' is stopped.

### What the 2002 Working Group Heard:

By necessity, hunting closures must always be a harvest management option for dealing with declining or depressed populations. Discussions at community meetings therefore focused on when it would be appropriate to impose them. There was general consensus that complete hunting closures should be the tool of last resort. There were also numerous comments that, if implemented, hunting closures should apply to **all** hunters and should include a management objective, a review date and a mechanism for lifting closures.

## **3.0 Recommendations Coming Out of General Comments**

A number of comments not directly related to the original discussion were heard at the community meetings.

### **3.1 Permanent Hunter ID Cards**

#### **What is it?**

Each hunter purchasing a hunting license would be given a permanent hunter identification number. This would be used to track such things as license purchases, permit hunt applications, harvest success for that individual. Each hunter would be issued an identification card showing his or her permanent ID number.

#### **When would it be used?**

Permanent ID numbers and cards would be issued to all hunters purchasing a hunting license. Hunters would use their hunter ID number when purchasing subsequent hunting licenses, applying for permit hunt draws, reporting harvest, etc.

#### **Issues to Consider**

A permanent hunter ID system would make it easier to track hunter activity over years. In the past, confusion has often arisen when people provide different variations on their name when purchasing hunting licenses or applying for permit hunt draws from one year to the next. For example, Rick Ward might be used one year and Richard Ward in the following year. This has created difficulties in determining how the names should be “weighted” for the permit draw.

#### **What the 2002 Working Group Heard:**

Comments from the public indicated that there was broad support for developing a permanent hunter identification system.

## **3.2 Special Hunting Privileges for the Disabled and Elders**

### **What is it?**

These would be hunting privileges given to Elders and the Disabled that would not be available to other Yukoners. It might include such things as permission to shoot from a vehicle, to hunt in closed areas, special access to hunting permits, surrogate shooters.

### **When would it be used?**

Only when there is a request for special hunting privileges from an elder or disabled person with a demonstrated need.

### **Issues to Consider**

- Specific guidelines would have to be followed in order to maintain public safety
- Defining “disabled” may be difficult
- Elders already have an exemption on hunting license fees

### **What the 2002 Working Group Heard:**

This is a complex issue and the Working Group did not have the time or resources to deal with it completely.

### **3.3 Special Hunting Privileges for Subsistence Lifestyle**

#### **What is it?**

This would be special hunting privileges given to people living a remote (i.e. no access to stores) subsistence lifestyle.

#### **When would it be used?**

Special hunting privileges would only be issued to individuals living a remote subsistence lifestyle where they do not have ready access to stores. Determination of whether people would qualify for special subsistence hunting privileges would be made on a case by case basis by a committee made up of representatives of the local RRC and YDE. Special hunting privileges might include an extended hunting season and/or priority access to permits in areas under hunting restrictions.

#### **Issues to Consider**

- It is likely that very few people would qualify for special subsistence hunting privileges.
- Providing a small number of subsistence hunters with extended hunting season privileges would not likely be of any significance in terms of the overall management of the moose population.
- Giving permits to people living a subsistence lifestyle would reduce the number of permits available to issue to other hunters through the permit draw system. In fact, giving one permit to a subsistence hunter may reduce the number available to others by as much as three permits. This is because these people are much more likely to take a moose than others are. The number of permits issued is usually two to three times higher than the maximum allowable annual moose harvest for an area because only between one third and one half of other hunters are usually successful.
- Giving special hunting privileges to subsistence hunters could be considered “local preference”.

#### **What the 2002 Working Group Heard:**

Comments in support of special hunting privileges, similar to those provided to trappers, for other people living a remote subsistence lifestyle were heard in several communities. This could include an extended hunting season to make it easier to freeze meat and, possibly, priority access to permits in restricted hunting areas.

## **3.4 Limiting Access and ORVs**

### **What is it?**

Areas are identified where access, and/or the use of ORVs, is restricted or prohibited.

### **When would it be used?**

When significant conservation concerns arise from - or significant and consistent habitat damage results from the improper use of ORV's being used for moose harvest.

### **Issues to Consider**

- This is a regulation that must be imposed by the Department of Energy Mines and Resources.
- ORV restrictions could not likely apply to subsistence harvesters

### **What the Working Group Heard:**

Although there is wide diversity of opinion related to access and ORV use, the public is anxious to have this issue addressed.