



Background

Moose are an important and iconic species in Manitoba. They contribute ecologically, are a source of food security and have significant cultural, social and economic values for many Manitobans. Over the last 10 to 15 years, declines in Manitoba's moose population and recommendations obtained through Crown-Indigenous consultation resulted in Moose Conservation Closures being put in place in various parts of southern Manitoba, including in the Duck Mountain (Game Hunting Areas (GHAs) 18, 18A, 18B, 18C) and Porcupine Mountain (GHAs 13 & 13A) areas.

A variety of natural and human-influenced factors can affect survival and the birth and death rates of moose, which in turn affect the number of moose in local populations. Hunting, parasites and disease, habitat loss or land-use changes, predation, and climate change, and the combination of these factors, all have varying effects on moose across the province and in the Duck Mountain and Porcupine Mountain areas. The most recent aerial survey for these areas was completed in 2020 and results suggest that the population trend is gradually increasing in the Duck Mountain area and remains stable in the Porcupine Mountain area.

While moose in these areas are showing signs of recovery, a complete re-opening and return to unlimited harvest in these areas is not sustainable. Demand for moose in the Duck Mountain and Porcupine Mountain areas exceeds what can be harvested sustainably and a total removal of the closures would jeopardize the long-term viability of the populations. A long-term shared moose management plan, including a framework for re-opening these areas, is necessary.

Manitoba is committed to involving First Nations and Metis communities in the development of a long-term shared moose management plan for the Duck Mountain and Porcupine Mountain areas to build relationships, promote reconciliation and to support sustainable moose management. Pending development of a long-term shared moose management plan, and based on feedback provided by First Nations and Metis communities in 2021, the department is proposing an adapted limited interim moose hunting opportunity to be available in the Duck Mountain and Porcupine Mountain areas in fall 2022.

Limited Interim Moose Hunting Opportunity

Why is the Department proposing a limited interim moose hunting opportunity?

- Results from aerial surveys suggest the Duck Mountain and Porcupine Mountain areas can sustain a limited harvest of moose.
- At this time, a complete re-opening of the Duck Mountain and Porcupine Mountain areas to moose hunting would jeopardize the long-term viability of the populations.
- The department recognizes the importance of moose harvest to Indigenous peoples and intends to provide opportunities to harvest this fall, while maintaining conservation objectives.
- This limited harvest is meant to facilitate eligible First Nations and Metis communities to harvest moose for the purposes they have identified as important, such as continuing to share in community traditions and to provide some meat to Elders and other significantly impacted members.
- This opportunity is being proposed as an interim harvest measure until a long-term shared moose management plan is developed.

Who is eligible to take part?

- Based on feedback provided by First Nations and Metis communities during the 2021 consultation process, this proposed limited interim moose hunting opportunity will only be offered to eligible Indigenous communities and will not include a licensed hunting component.
- A licensed hunting opportunity may be considered in the future as populations recover.
- First Nations and Metis communities that were identified as being significantly impacted during the 2011 Crown-Indigenous consultation process that led to the Conservation Closures are eligible to participate.

Where is it being offered?

- Duck Mountains (GHAs 18, 18A, 18B, 18C) and Porcupine Mountains (GHAs 13, 13A).

When is it taking place?

- From Oct. 31 to Dec. 11, 2022.
- As cow moose are so vital in rebuilding moose populations, these dates have been proposed to avoid the rut (moose breeding season) and conclude prior to bull moose shedding their antlers, which typically begins mid-December.

How many moose are available to harvest?

- As the moose population continues to recover, a harvest limit has been established based on scientific biological surveys and under the guidance of the precautionary principle.
- 60 bull moose (40 in the Duck Mountains and 20 in the Porcupine Mountains) would be available for eligible Indigenous communities to harvest.
- This harvest limit is based on a two per cent harvest of the estimated moose population. While this is on the lower end of a range of sustainable harvest rates of moose elsewhere in Canada, the department is taking a cautious approach consistent with the precautionary principle, until a long-term shared moose management strategy has been developed.
- Since moose in these areas face numerous threats to their survival and have not experienced widespread harvesting pressure since 2011, there is a need to be cautious in reintroducing harvesting opportunities to ensure they are protected for future generations.

What other requirements are being proposed?

- **Bulls-only Harvest** – Harvesting of cow moose has a direct negative impact of the reproductive capacity of a population. Cow moose are the future of our moose population, and protecting them is vital while the population rebuilds. A bulls-only harvest will help to ensure the moose populations remain stable or increase.
- **Hunting Tags** – First Nation and Metis communities will be issued limited interim moose hunting tags by the department. Hunters may harvest one bull moose and would be required to attach a limited interim moose hunting opportunity tag to the carcass if they are successful. This requirement supports ongoing protection of the moose population by providing a way for conservation officers to monitor moose hunting in the area to ensure only rights holders harvest moose in accordance with the limited interim moose hunting opportunity. Otherwise, there would be no way to ensure that hunting remains within the sustainable cap of 60 bull moose.



An unlimited number of hunters can be listed on individual authorizations so that multiple people, including youth, can take part in the harvesting of each bull-moose.

- **Night-hunting** – Moose are dark-coloured animals and their antlers are difficult to see at night. For the purpose of safety and in support of protecting cow moose populations, hunting at night during the limited interim moose hunting opportunity would not be authorized.
- **Harvest Reporting** – First Nations and Metis communities that successfully harvest a moose during the limited interim moose hunting opportunity would be required to report their harvest to the department. This information is used to track population change and support moose management.
- **Voluntary Biological Sample Submission** – To aid the recovery of moose in the Duck Mountain and Porcupine Mountain areas and to further understand potential factors that may be negatively affecting them, collection of information about the health of moose is of high importance to the department. Harvesters issued tags are encouraged to submit biological samples from moose harvested during the limited interim moose hunting opportunity.

How can I participate?

- Eligible First Nations and Metis communities will be contacted to participate in this opportunity and invited to discuss principles for sharing and allocating the available harvest.
- Prior to the start of the opportunity, eligible First Nations and Metis communities interested in participating will receive an allocated number of the moose hunting authorizations informed through ongoing consultation.
- First Nations and Metis leadership may then distribute these moose hunting authorizations to their membership as they feel appropriate.
- Individual First Nations and Metis communities harvesters that are interested in taking part in the upcoming opportunity are encouraged to contact their community leadership with requests to participate.

Long-term Moose Management

A critical aspect of sustainable moose management is to listen and work with First Nations and Metis communities collaboratively to co-develop a long-term moose shared management plan for the Duck Mountain and Porcupine Mountain areas. It is vital that we work collaboratively to manage our moose populations with the common goal of long-term sustainability and availability for future generations.

We recognize a new shared management approach is required as past approaches to develop a long-term shared moose management plan have simply not worked. The department is currently developing options to collectively engage Indigenous communities on moose and shared management discussions before the end of 2022. Through this process we hope to support relationship building, information sharing, further our understanding of the views and concerns of Indigenous communities regarding moose management, and work together to outline a path forward for further engagement and co-development of a long-term shared moose management plan. As the purpose of these meetings will be to learn and understand Indigenous perspectives on moose and shared management, engagement with stakeholders will occur separately from this process. Department staff will be reaching out in the near future to request community participation on this approach. We remain open to working with a mutually acceptable neutral facilitator to help reach our common objective of a sustainable moose management plan.

Manitoba remains committed to co-developing a long-term shared moose management plan for the Duck Mountain and Porcupine Mountain areas in partnership with Indigenous communities and with input from licenced hunters and key stakeholders. It is our hope that jointly managing moose on an ongoing and sustainable basis will provide increased opportunities for rights-based harvesters and licenced hunters, and generally support healthy moose populations for the benefit of our environment and communities.

