

# SHEEP POPULATIONS, HUNTERS, AND HARVEST

a summary on current status and trends

Board of Game Meeting  
13 February 2015, Wasilla  
RC2, Tab 1



# The information provided is intended to:

- Provide a resource for the Board of Game to review and discuss regulation proposals regarding Dall sheep.
- Complement the information presented in the Alaska Sheep Hunter User Survey report by Dr. Todd Brinkman.
- Present information to help sheep hunters and others prepare proposal comments for the Board of Game.



# The information addresses these concerns:

## Management

- Hunter concerns about crowding
- Guide / Transporter / Resident hunter reported conflicts
- Public desire to change or modify sheep hunt management strategies

## BOG Proposals

- To restrict nonresident hunting or expand resident opportunity
- To create additional drawing hunts or limit nonresidents to draw hunts
- To limit access and change bag limits and seasons





# The report summarizes the following:

- Sheep population status
- Hunter and harvest numbers
- Hunting opportunities and access
- Harvest trend and characteristics
- Guide / commercial activities



# RESIDENCY is divided into two categories

RESIDENTS – includes residents of Alaska who:

- do not hire commercial services
- hire transporters (state regulated)
- hire air taxis (FFA regulated)
- hire guides

NONRESIDENTS – includes nonresidents who:

- are citizens of the United States
- are not citizens of the United States
- Hire a guide and/or other commercial services
- hunt with second degree kindred relatives



# The data are divided into 4 time periods

- **1972-1980** Pre-ANILCA - leading up to the loss of 25% of AK sheep hunting opportunity; ADF&G began formally collecting statewide sheep harvest information
- **1981-1988** Post-ANILCA - leading up to the 1988 Owsichuk Decision that eliminated exclusive guide use areas in AK; the beginning of full-curl bag limit regulation
- **1989-2000** Post Owsichuk Decision and statewide implementation of full-curl bag limit; there were declines in sheep hunter numbers during this period
- **2001-2013** Continued decline in sheep hunter numbers, sheep declines in several areas due to severe weather; mandatory sealing (horn-plugging) for rams; new draw permit hunts in central Chugach Mountains; any-ram draw hunts offered for the first time



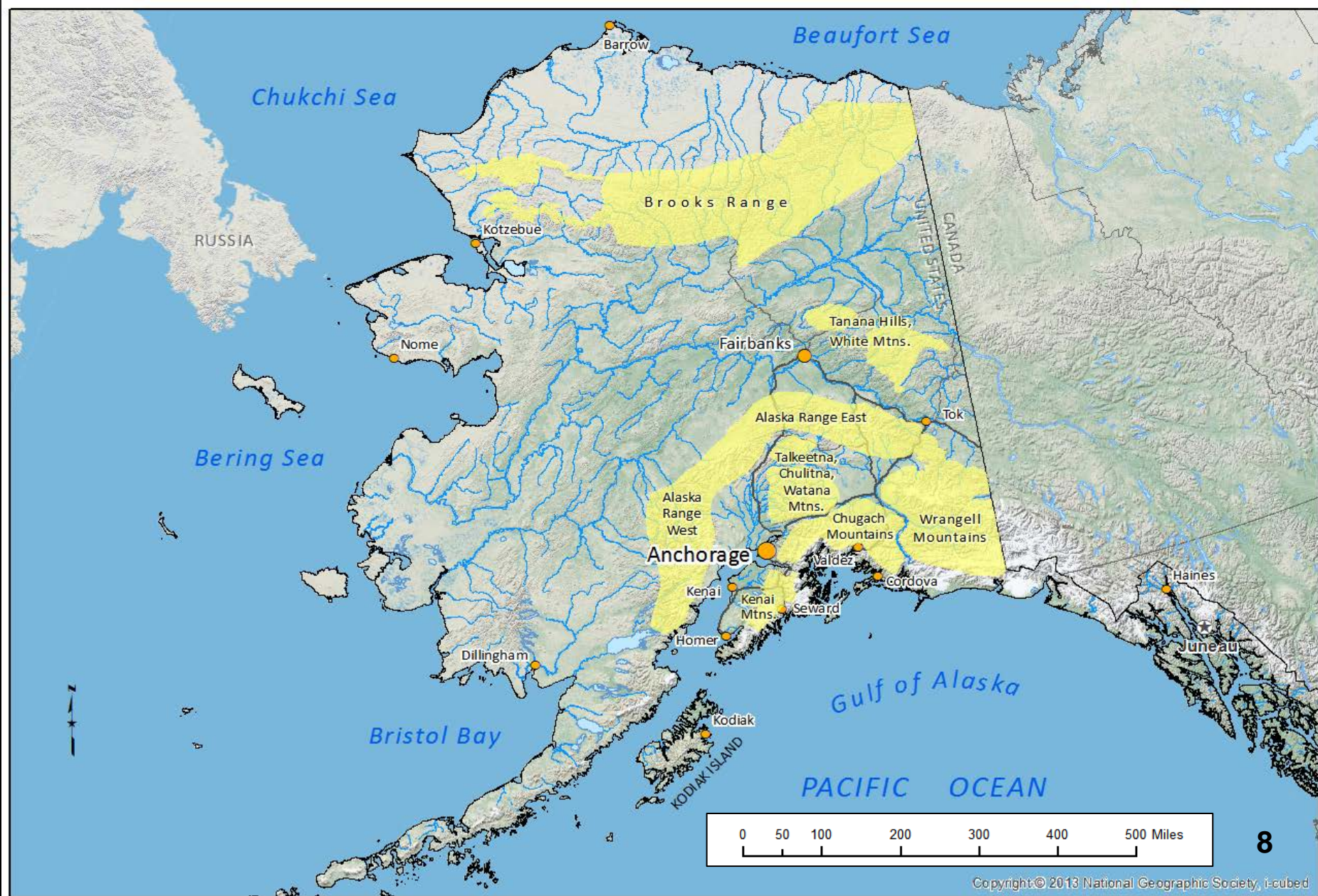
# The data are also divided into eight major Sheep Range Areas

- Alaska Range EAST
- Alaska Range WEST
- Brooks Range
- Chugach Mountains
- Kenai Mountains
- Talkeetna Mountains, Chulitna-Watana Hills
- Tanana Hills, White Mountains
- Wrangell Mountains





# Eight major sheep range areas in Alaska





# Sheep Population trends across Alaska:

## Survey and Inventory Report Area

## Population Trend

Kenai Peninsula

Decreasing

Alaska Range west

Unknown

South Wrangell Mountains

Stable or Increasing

Chugach Mountains

Stable at low levels

Mentasta, Nutzotin, and N. Wrangells

Stable or Decreasing

Tok Management Area

Stable or Decreasing

Talkeetna Mtns., Chulitna-Watana Hills

Stable at low levels

Delta Controlled Use Area

Stable

N. AK Range, E. of Nenana Riv., W. of Delta Riv.

Stable

White Mountains

Stable

Tanana Hills

Stable

Western Brooks Range

Decreasing

Central Brooks Range

Decreasing

Eastern Brooks Range

Decreasing

1990

56,740 (53,900-62,400)

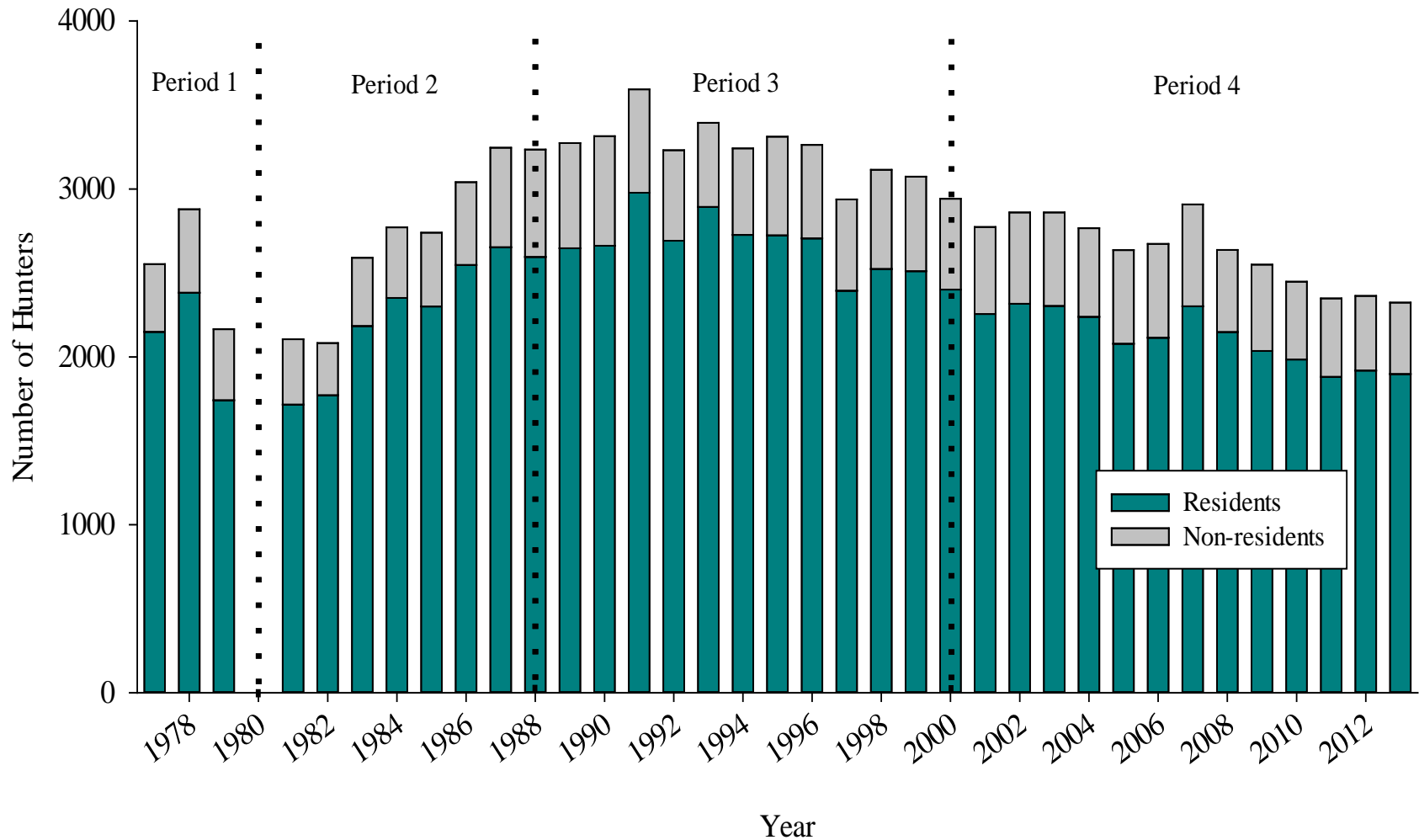
2000

50,850 (48,300-55,900)

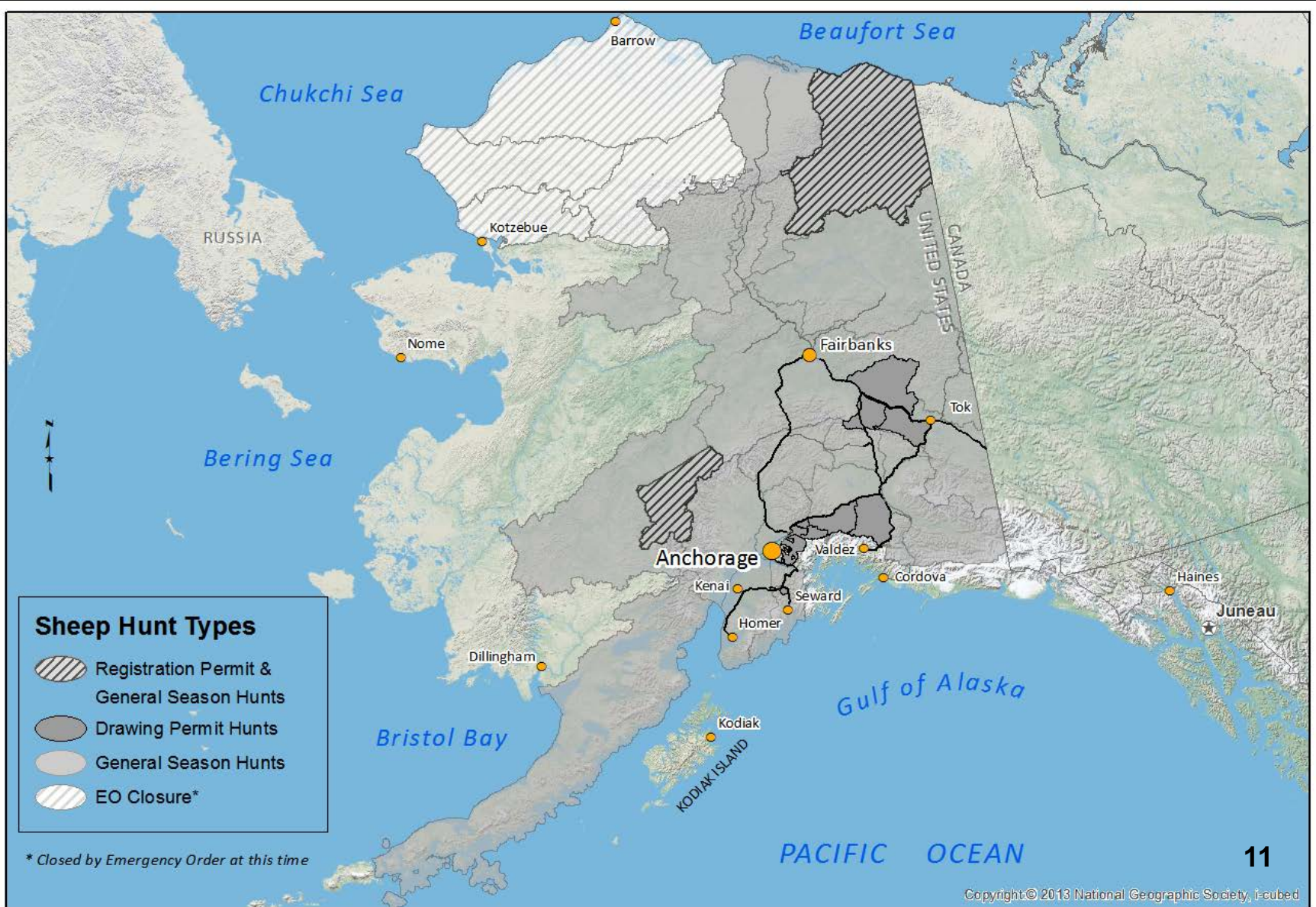
2010

45,010 (42,800-49,500)

# The total number of sheep hunters has been declining over the last 20 years.

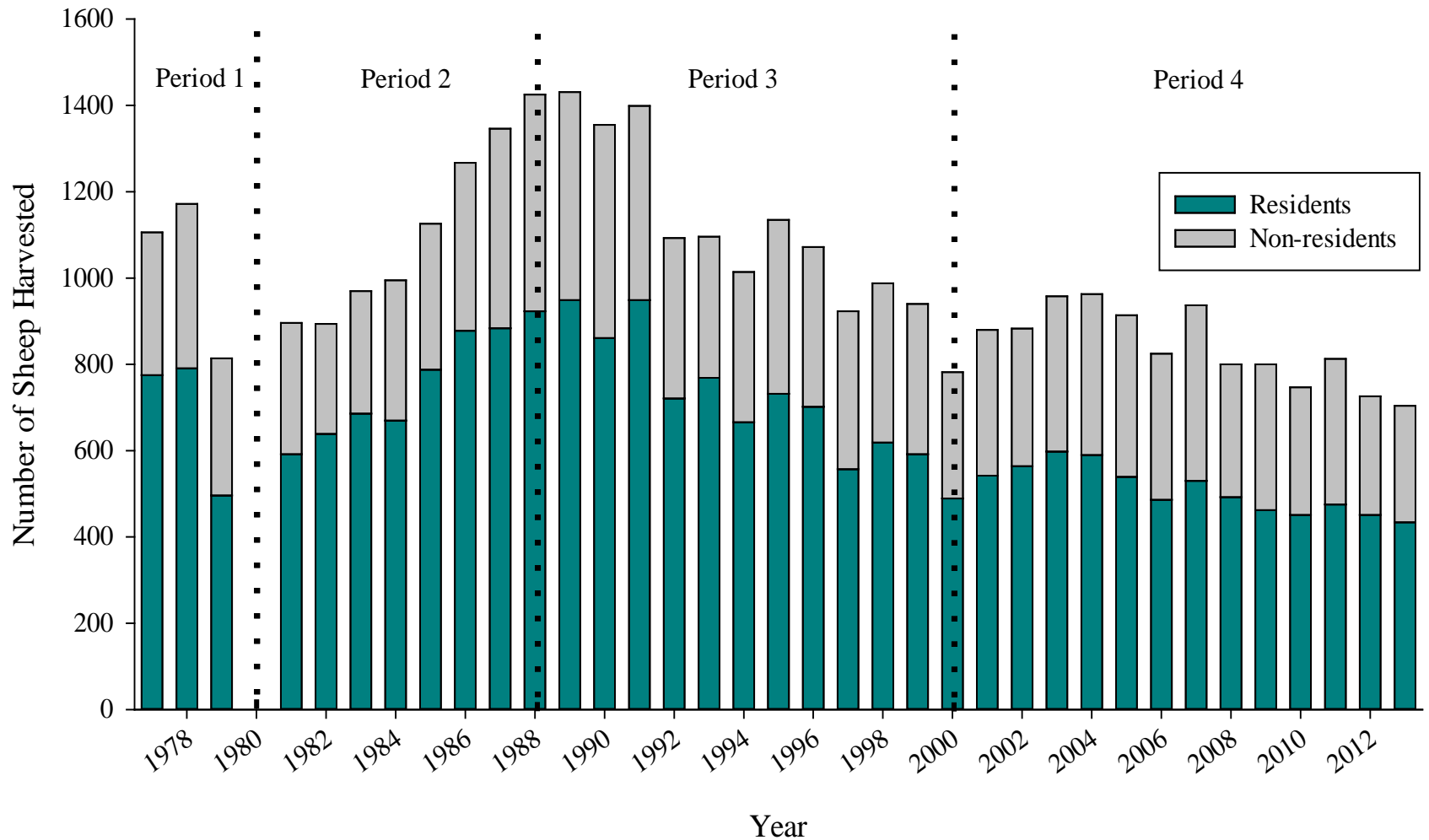


# Sheep Hunt Types (opportunities) in Alaska

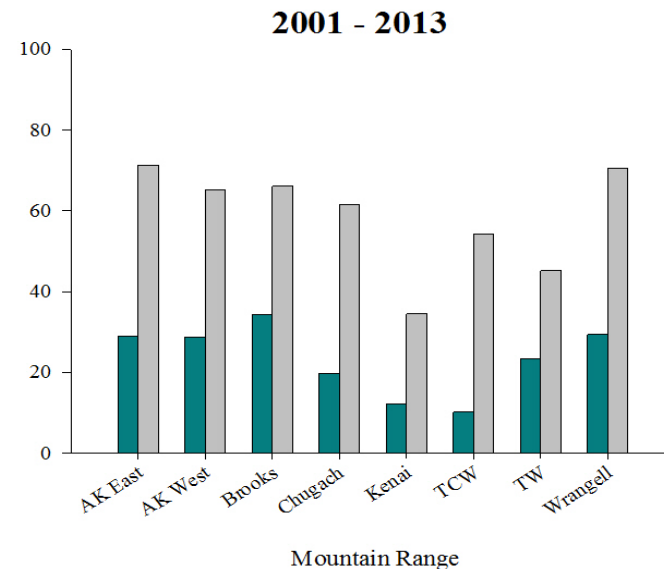
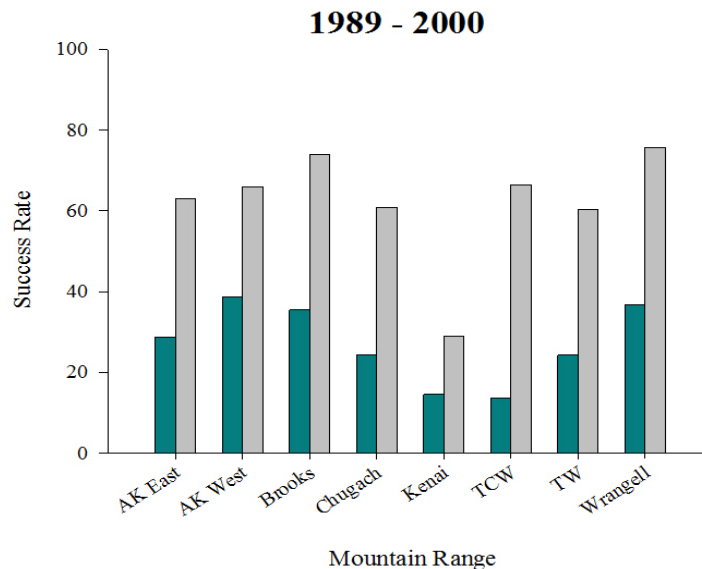
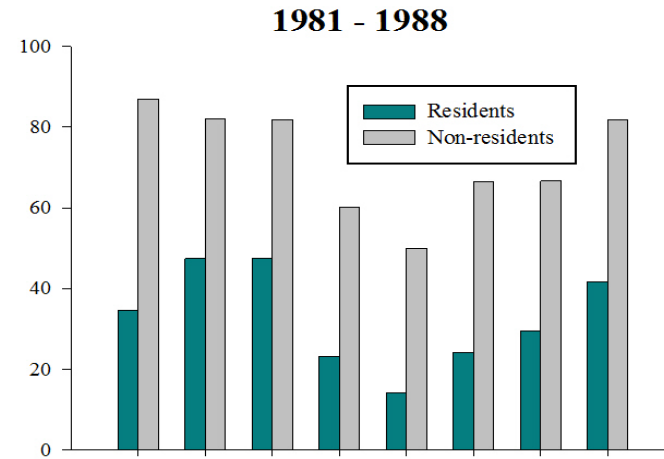
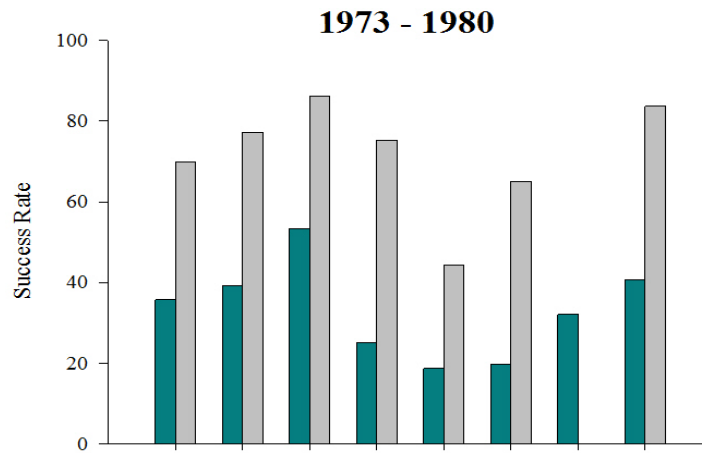




# The total sheep harvest has also been declining for over 20 years.



# Nonresident success rates are most often twice that of residents.



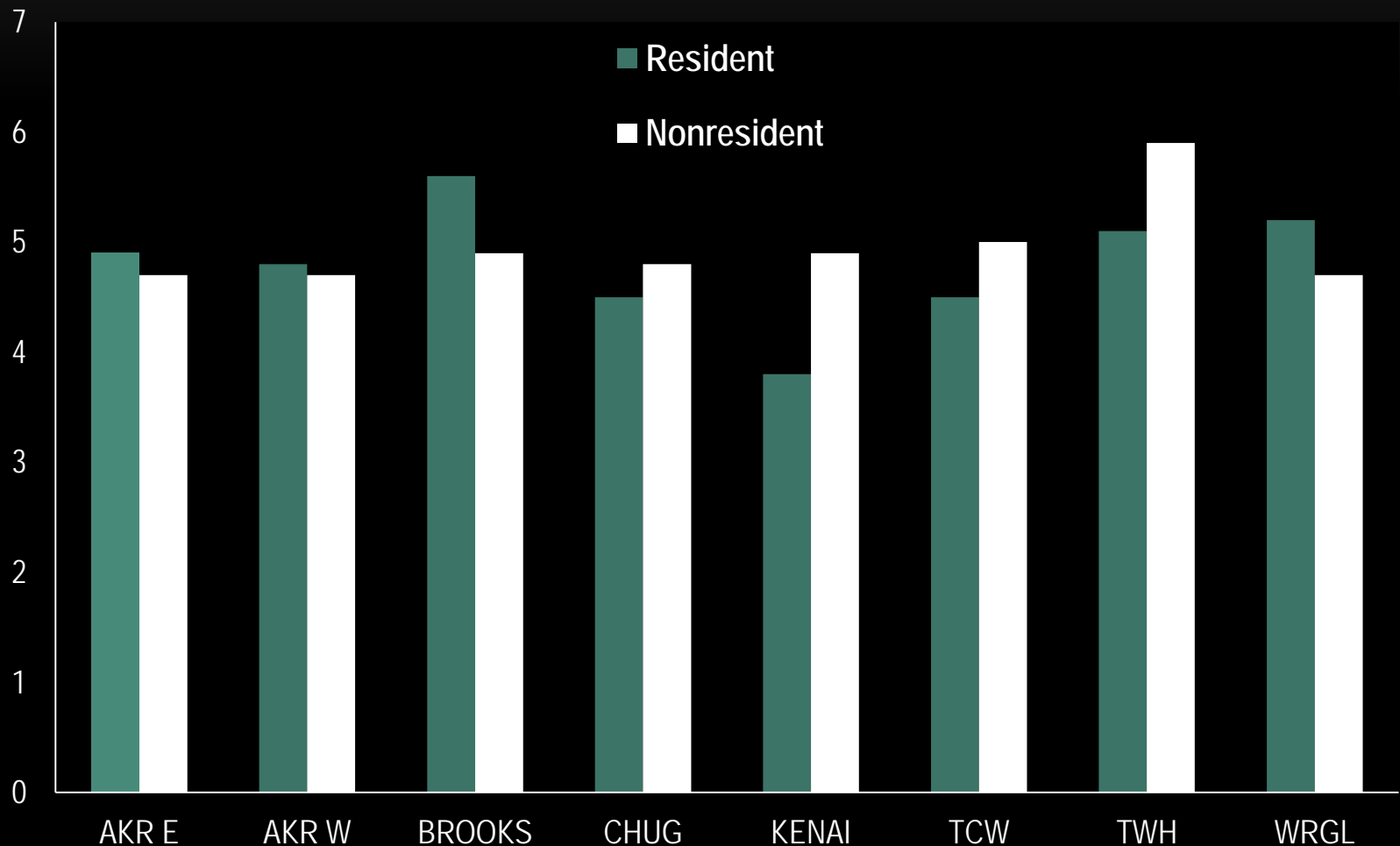


How many days did it take to harvest a sheep?



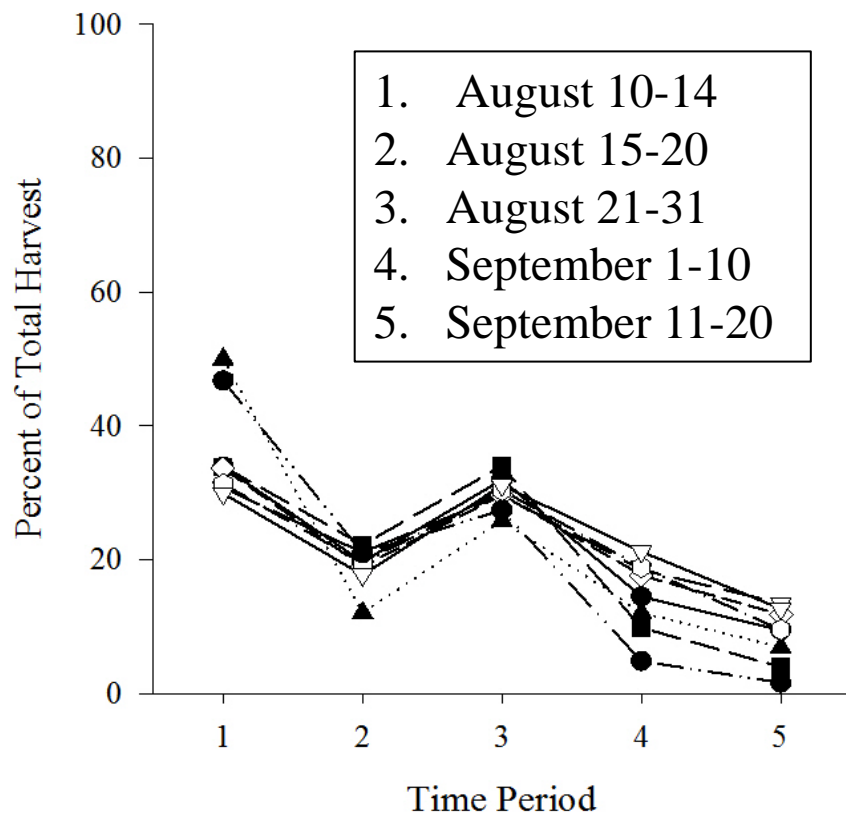


**There is not a lot of difference in the number of days hunted for successful hunters.**

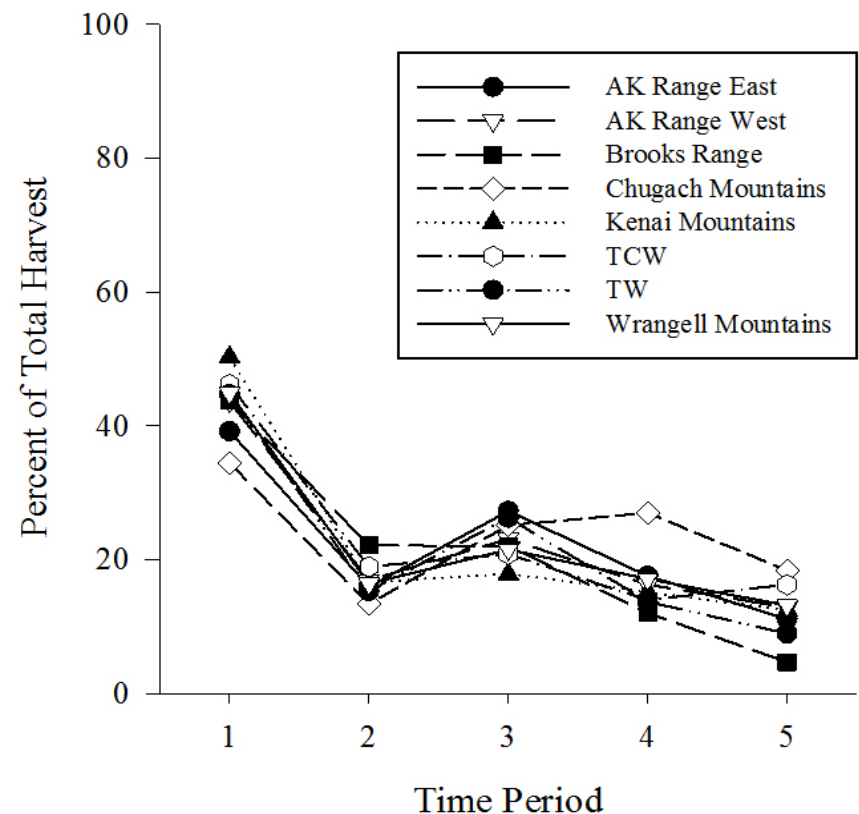


# Most of the harvest occurs in the first 10 days for both residents and nonresidents.

## Nonresidents



## Residents

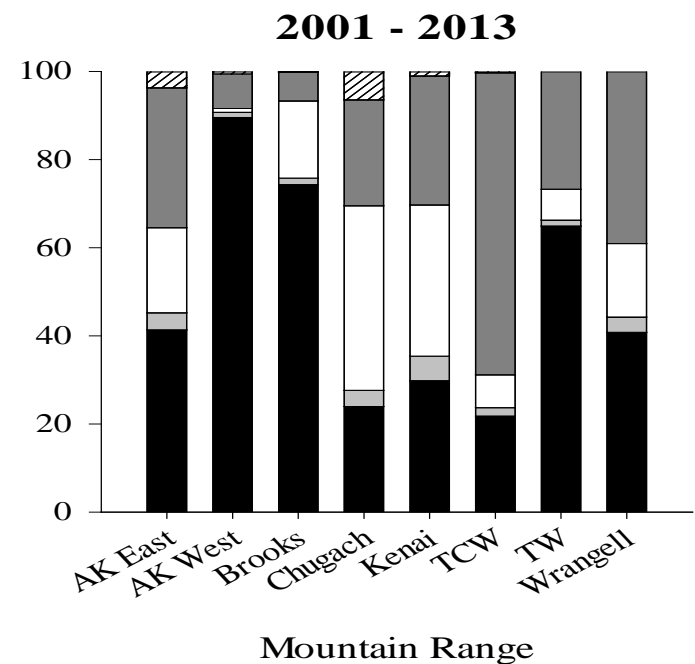
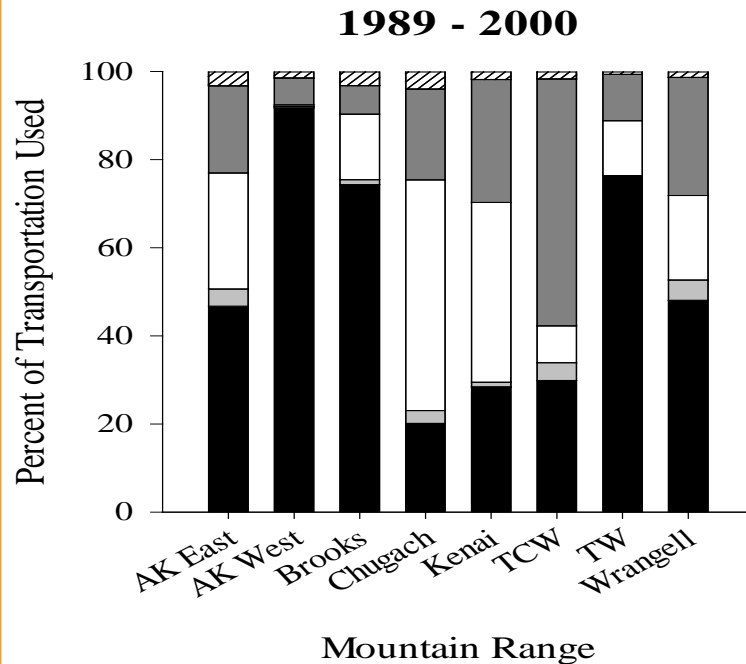
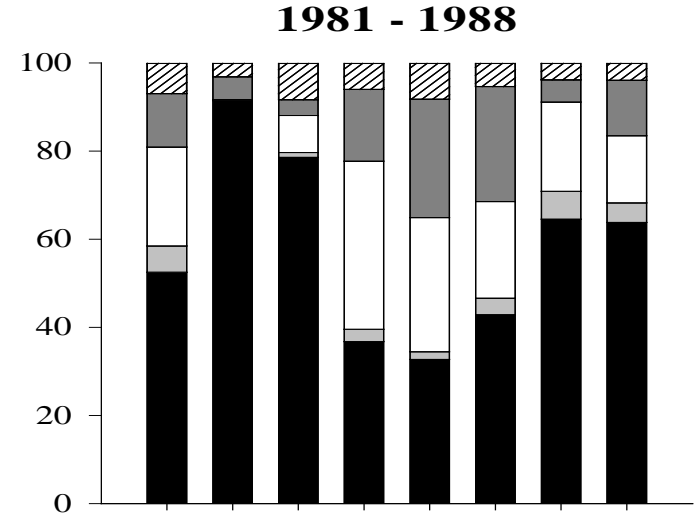
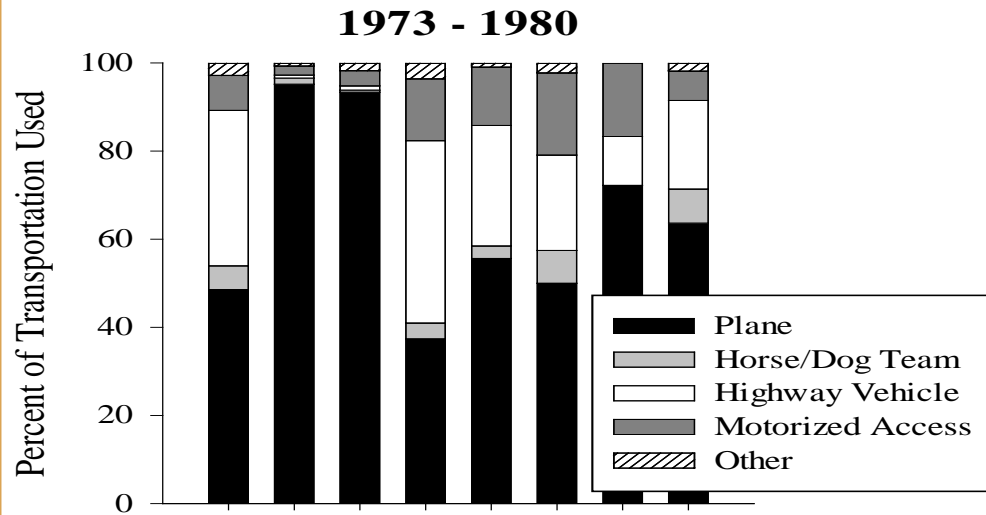


How do sheep hunters get  
to the place where they  
*start walking*?



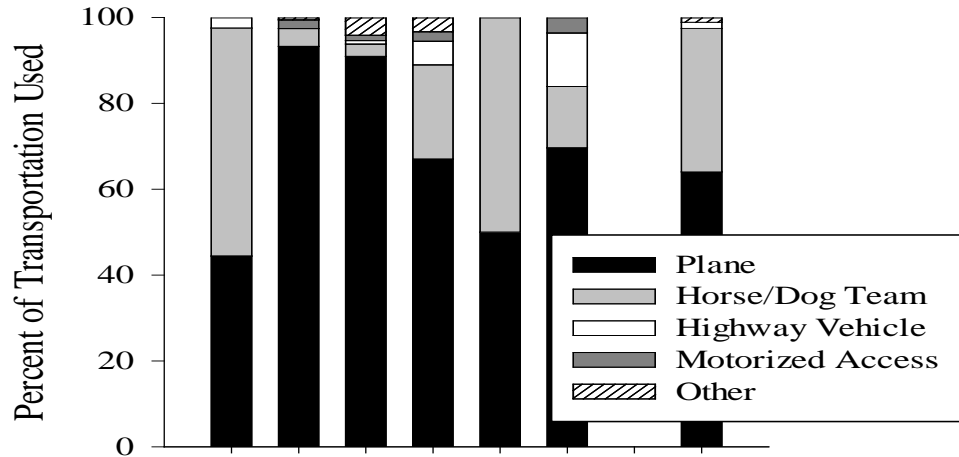


# Residents use planes, ORVs, highway vehicles.

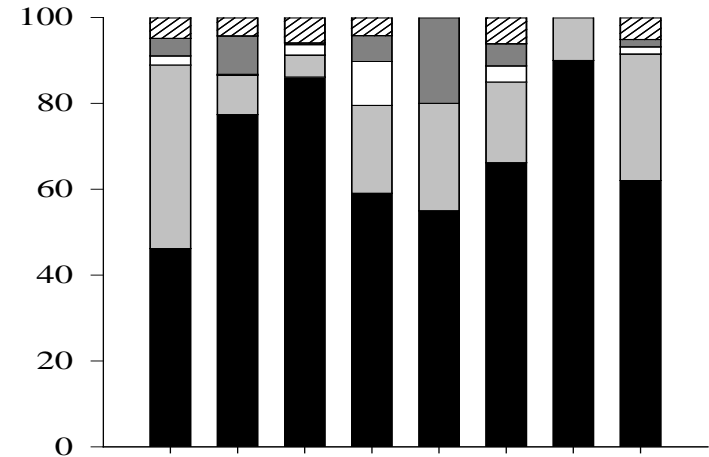


# Nonresidents use planes and horses.

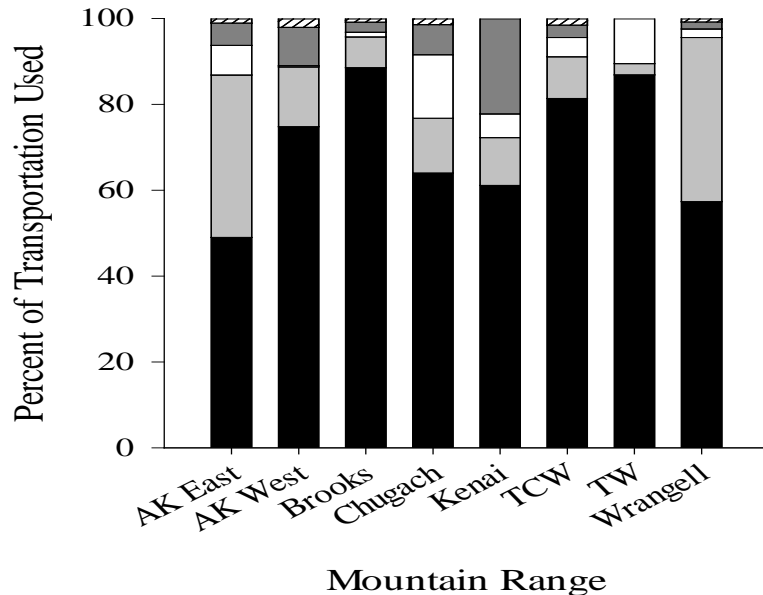
**1973 - 1980**



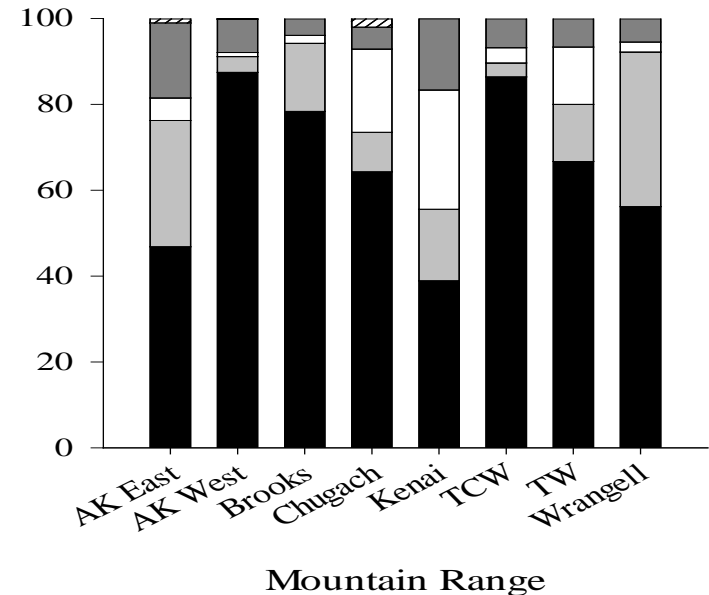
**1981 - 1988**



**1989 - 2000**



**2001 - 2013**



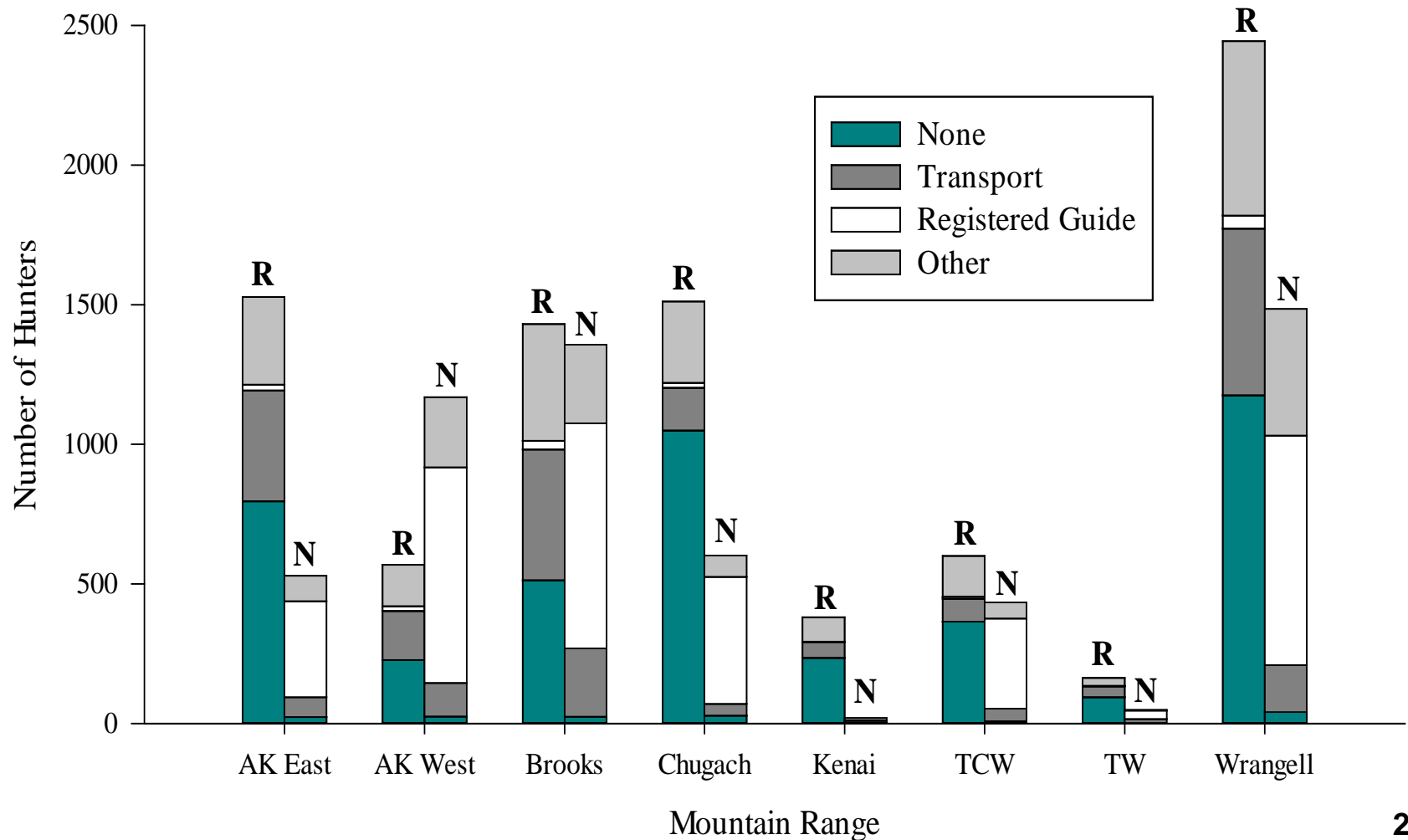
So what kind of commercial services do sheep hunters use?





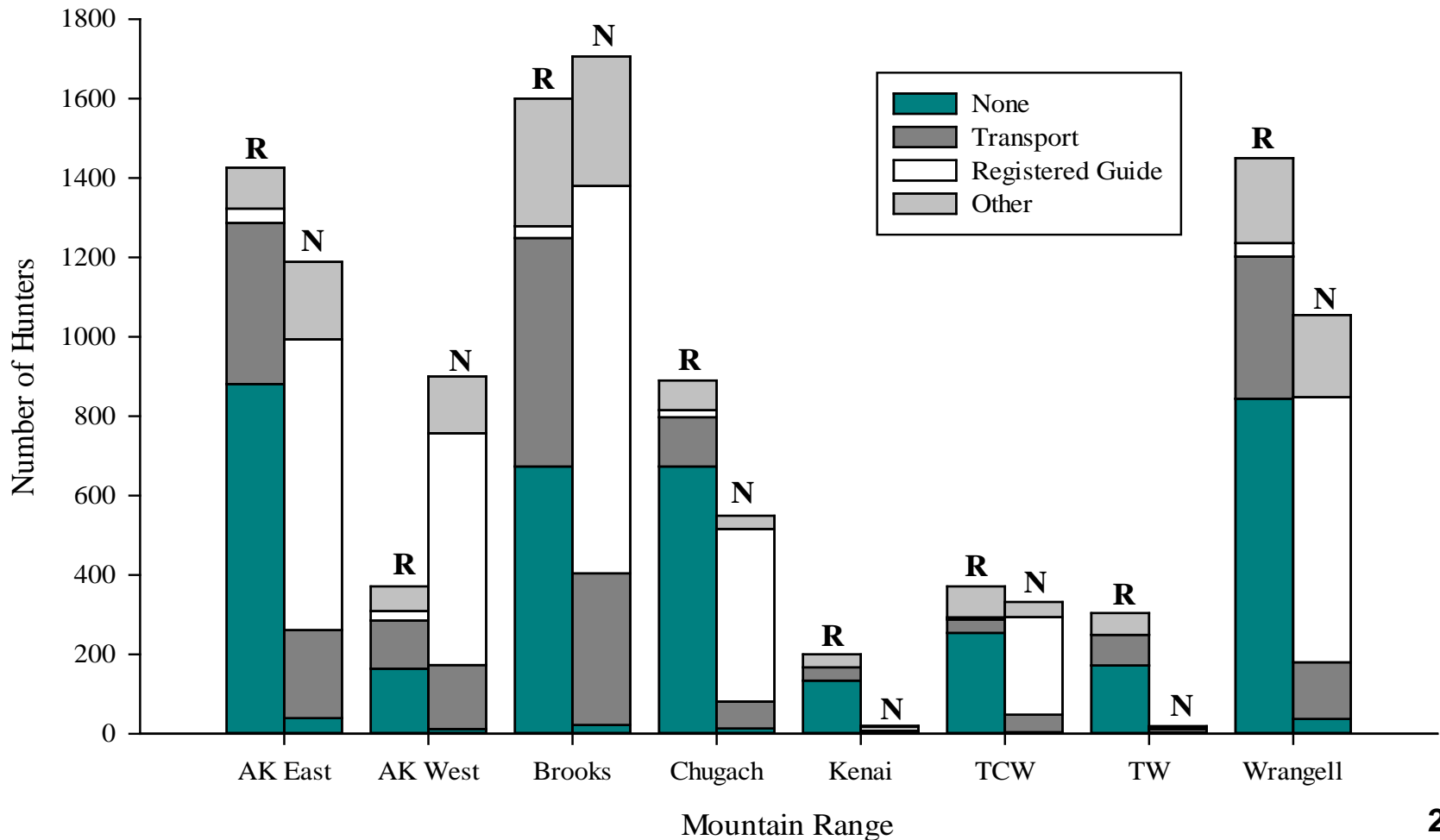
# Nonresidents typically hire guides and/or other commercial services.

RES AND NR COMMERCIAL SERVICES REPORTED 1989-2000

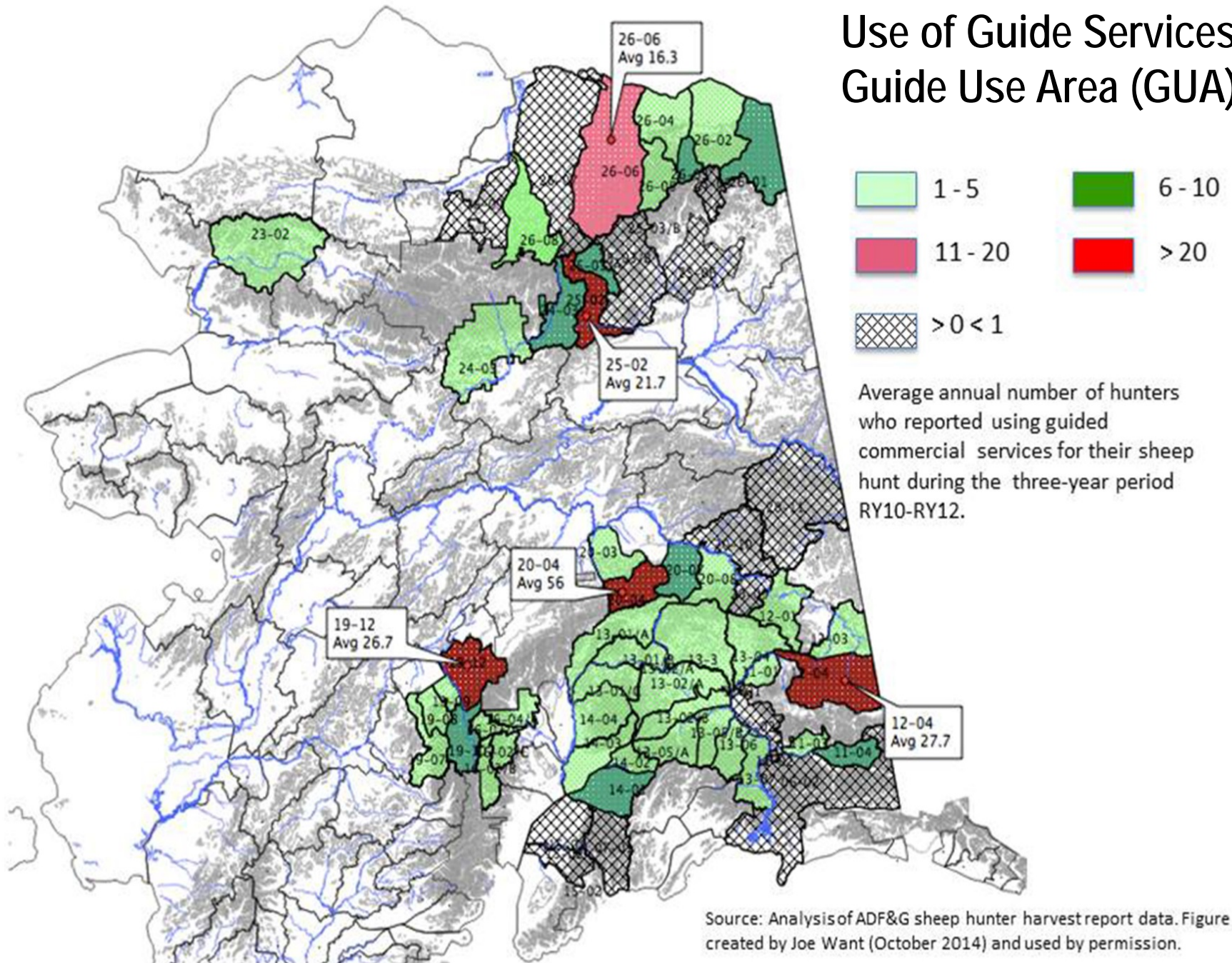


# The majority of residents do not use commercial services.

RES AND NR COMMERCIAL SERVICES REPORTED 2001-2013



# Use of Guide Services by Guide Use Area (GUA)





# Nonresidents hunting with second-degree-kindred relatives

- Most of the range areas show NR sheep hunters reporting guides 70% or more of the time
- Other commercial use categories such as lodge/camp and other services are not well defined
- For the Tok Management Area (TMA), 20 to 25% of the NR draw applicants intend to hunt with relatives



# SUMMARY

- Sheep populations in Alaska are currently considered to be stable or decreasing
- For over twenty years, there have been declines in the total number of hunters and number of sheep harvested
- Nonresident sheep hunter success rates are most often twice that of residents although there is little difference in the number of days hunted between successful residents and nonresidents
- Over half of the total harvest occurs in the first 10 days of the season with a majority of this occurring in the first 5 days



## SUMMARY *continued*

- Nonresident sheep hunters reported using airplanes and horses more often than other methods for access
- Residents reported using airplanes the most with ORVs and highway vehicles also used more often for access
- Most nonresident hunters hire guides and/or other commercial services while the majority of residents do not
- Residents that use commercial services hire transporters more than all other types





# QUESTIONS?

