



Unit 4 RG150 Mountain Goat Hunt FAQs

Q: Why did ADF&G create new hunt zones?

A: Dividing Baranof Island into more zones allows biologists to manage at the subpopulation level, which should afford hunters more opportunities and reduce the possibility of localized overharvest. Under the previous management strategy, quotas were based on larger geographical areas, which sometimes included several subpopulations. The quota for a large zone could be reached after several goats were taken from a small area around a single access point. That resulted in the large area being closed while additional harvest opportunity remained in more remote portions of that larger zone. This new strategy of subdividing large zones is providing more opportunity for hunters by allowing more remote zones to stay open after zones with easier access close.

Q: How were the zone boundaries determined?

A: A variety of factors were taken into account: 1) GPS collar data was used to identify subpopulations and their general ranges, 2) historical aerial survey zones were incorporated to provide continuity of previous survey data, 3) harvest records were used to identify primary access locations, 4) geographical features prohibitory to goat movements such as large valley bottoms or steep ridges were used when possible, 5) distinct geographical features to help hunters identify boundaries in the field, and 6) local knowledge from experienced Baranof Island goat hunters were all taken into consideration. Our goals were to create boundaries that encompassed subpopulations of goats and that hunters could readily identify in the field.

Q: Will the zone boundaries change again?

A: Under RG150, hunt zone boundaries are discretionary for the area management biologist, so changes are possible. Part of wildlife management is being adaptive, allowing for changes to best respond to the situation. However, year to year continuity and tradition is a goal of managers, so it is our hope that these boundaries will remain long-term. A great amount of time and effort has been spent to insure these boundaries are appropriate. No changes will be made without adequate notice.

Q: Does the increased number of zones mean the nanny harvest can increase?

A: ADF&G and US Forest Service biologists would like to see the take of nannies remain low, similar to what it has been in the recent past. Goat populations are slow to grow or rebuild and vulnerable to overharvest, particularly overharvest of nannies. Nannies do not breed until they are four to six years old and twins are rare. A critical component to the Baranof Island goat population recovery and our ability to implement this new management strategy is hunters' proven ability and willingness to select billies over nannies. ADF&G will continue to educate and encourage hunters to select billies, and implement management actions to keep the nanny harvest at low levels, including emergency closure of a zone when one nanny is harvested. Hunters who select billies are actively participating in the sound management of goats and creating more opportunities for themselves and other hunters in the future.

Q: What if more than one nanny is harvested in a zone before it can be closed by emergency order?

A: Managers will attempt to implement necessary emergency orders as soon as practical and re-evaluate population levels on an annual basis. If a zone is over-harvested one year, it may be necessary to limit harvest in subsequent years.

Q: Why retain the “One and Done” policy, especially with high populations on Baranof Island?

A: This strategy has been the most effective for reducing female mountain goat harvest ever implemented in Alaska. When implemented in 2011, there were many areas of population concern and any additional female harvest was likely to have negative impacts. The strategy was a way to allow some areas to remain open to hunting despite justification to close more areas. Because the strategy has been so effective in reducing female harvest it has been retained even for areas where harvest of one female no longer represents a significant population concern. Baranof Island goat hunters have largely responded positively to this strategy and maintaining the policy helps retain a culture of selecting for billies. This “culture shift” could be critical in the future if populations return to low levels and there is increased biological justification for limited nanny take. In addition, ensuring low female harvest creates more harvest opportunity via male harvest. In summary, we have retained the one and done policy not necessarily because we currently have population concerns but because it is an effective management tool. It helps keep hunters focused on avoiding female harvest. It also maintains high male harvest opportunities in areas that have good access, allowing more people to participate in a hunt that is otherwise difficult to access over a vast majority of its range.

Q: Areas of Baranof Island are not included in a hunt zone; can I harvest a goat in these places?

A: Although goats explore unoccupied areas, some parts of Baranof Island likely are not goat habitat, and may never support huntable subpopulations. Therefore, we did not include them as hunt zones. If you encounter a goat in one of these closed areas, you may not shoot it. Those goats are likely dispersers and if they survive, can contribute to gene flow and colonization of unused habitat. Sitka ADF&G is interested in your pictures and videos of goats in unusual locations.

Q: Is Blue Lake going to open?

A: Hunt zones north (Clarence Kramer) and east (Upper Blue Lake) of Blue Lake opened again in 2017. These areas had not had an open season since 2010. These areas had been closed from 2011-2016 because of previous high harvests, especially females, and the relative ease of access making goats vulnerable to overharvest. In addition to the Blue Lake zones, the Mt. Katlian Zone also opened in 2017. This area had been closed since 2010 and has historically been a popular goat hunting area. Managers will closely monitor harvests in these particular zones and take conservative actions when necessary.

Q: Why are some zones closed to hunting?

A: ADF&G manages goats on a system of 6 goat “points” per every 100 goats in the subpopulation; a billy counts as 1 point, a nanny counts as 2 points. Different area offices use slight variations of this strategy depending on their unique situation. Hunt managers determine a quota or number of allowable harvest points per zone prior to the season based on survey information. On Baranof, managers have determined that a zone needs to have a subpopulation capable of supporting a harvest of 2 points (or one female). This equates to a minimum subpopulation size of about 30-35 goats.

Q: What happens if a zone closes while I am in the field?

A: ADF&G strives to provide adequate notice to hunters prior to closing a hunt area. Emergency orders (EOs) for RG150 hunt zones are usually announced 48-72 hours before they become effective. An EO may also be issued prior to a quota being met in anticipation of additional harvest from hunters currently in the field. While ADF&G makes every effort to notify hunters of emergency orders, it is also the hunter's responsibility to stay up to date on current closures.

Q: How do I find out which zones are open or closed?

A: The easiest way is to visit the ADF&G office in Sitka. Notices and maps will be available to the public. They will also be posted to the ADF&G website and at harbor ramps and vendors in town. If you are on our voluntary email distribution list, you will be notified via email when announcements are made. Please contact the ADF&G office in Sitka (747-5449) to be added to this distribution list.

Q: Is it okay to harvest collared goats?

A: Every collared mountain goat represents approximately \$7,000 worth of equipment, salary and helicopter time as well as some level of risk to personnel involved in the captures. It is an extreme effort. The information collected from these goats is invaluable in our efforts to provide you with the highest quality goat hunting opportunity as well as the highest level of mountain goat conservation in North America. We sincerely appreciate your willingness to pass on opportunities to harvest collared animals. If a collared goat is harvested, the hunter is required to submit the collar to the Sitka ADF&G office.

Q: How many collared goats are there now? Are you planning to collar more?

A: Researchers attempt to maintain about 30 goats "on air" annually. Some things we learn from our collaring efforts include: home ranges, travel corridors, seasonal movement patterns, adult survival, kid recruitment, and survey sightability. We also collect biological samples and take morphological measurements that are used for DNA analysis, disease monitoring, habitat quality assessments, and a number of other analyses. We plan to continue collaring goats as funding research priorities allow.

Q: What does Benchmark mean?

A: The Nelson Bay and Red Bluff Bay zones use the term, "benchmark", as part of their description. This is a U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) monument set in the ground as a survey marker.

