



Unit 4 RG150 Mountain Goat Hunt FAQs

~2017~

Q: Why is ADF&G creating these 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 should provide 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? Do 21 open zones mean 21 nannies can be harvested?

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 reproduce and vulnerable to over-harvest, particularly overharvest of nannies. A critical component to the Baranof Island goat population's continued 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: Some parts of Baranof Island are not included in a hunt zone; what if I see a goat in these areas?

A: Take a picture! 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.

Q: Is Blue Lake going to open?

A: Zones north (Clarence Kramer) and east (Upper Blue Lake) of Blue Lake will open for the 2017 season. These areas have not had an open season since 2010 and have historically had very high harvests and a high percentage of female harvest. These areas have been closed the past six years because of previous high harvests and the relative ease of access making goats vulnerable to over-harvest. In addition to the Blue Lake zones, the Mt. Katlian Zone will also open. This area has also 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. The zone south of Blue Lake (Bear Mountain) will remain closed.

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. Since individual Baranof Island hunt zones have a maximum allowance of 1 female goat, zones need to have a population capable of sustaining a harvest of at least 2 points. This equates to a minimum subpopulation size of roughly 35 goats necessary to have a hunt. If new aerial surveys indicate increased populations, it is possible for some zones to be opened by emergency order during the season.

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 turn it in to the Sitka ADF&G office.

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

A: There are currently 25 goats “on air.” 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 in 2017 and 2018, and pending funding, possibly beyond that.

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.

