

PROPOSAL 36

5 AAC 85.065. Hunting seasons and bag limits for small game.

Reduce the bag limit for grouse for drainages that cross the Juneau-Douglas Road system in Unit 1C as follows:

Reduce the grouse bag limit to three per day for the drainages that cross the Juneau-Douglas Road System.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Increased hunting pressure has led to localized population declines in the sooty grouse. There are multiple reasons for the increased hunting pressure: 1) Advances in outdoor recreation technology has resulted in more capable snow-machines that are able to traverse steeper terrain giving more access to grouse habitat. Similarly, the increased popularity of backcountry skiing has increased the number of users who can access grouse terrain that previously would have remained inaccessible until the snows melted. 2) Hunting shows and social media have highlighting this fun and unique species, and there has been a desire to introduce non-hunters to the sport of hunting with classes and workshops highlighting spring grouse. 3) Declines in the Chinook population has limited the early fishing season opportunities. Chinook fishing frequently doesn't begin until after spring grouse season has closed. Those seeking a spring activity have shifted to grouse hunting. While the population of sooty grouse is stable across southeast Alaska, areas with high hunting pressure are often reduced to only the most inaccessible birds hooting from perilous cliffs.

Sooty grouse is one of the best species to introduce beginners to the sport of hunting. Decreasing the daily bag limit in the most accessible and heavily used areas will help spread out the harvest of grouse between more hunters and will keep more grouse in the areas that beginner hunters are likely to use when introduced to the sport.

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