

Anna Deal
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**Proposal 204 – Close Resident and Non-Resident Dall Sheep Hunting for 5 Years
Oppose as Written**

My name is Anna Deal. My husband, 4 children and I have a family hunting camp in unit 19C. I have grown up hunting there, and we have recently lived there year-round working remotely and homeschooling our children. We are highly vested in the area and surrounding resident sheep population.

I oppose proposal 204 as written, with a full closure of unit 19C to all sheep hunting. To go from no limits to full closure is rash, unnecessary, and unfairly penalizes resident hunters.

However, I do support action that would place limits on non-resident hunting.

In my opinion, we are in the position we are today because of the failure to place a limit on non-resident hunters. Restrictions should be placed on the group taking 90% of the sheep: non-resident hunters, not on Alaska residents. Non-residents should have been limited to a drawing-only permit system long ago.

I would support a limited permit or drawing system for non-residents while keeping it open to resident hunters, and especially resident youth hunters for the following reasons:

1. Allowing for unlimited harvest of full curl rams is not a sustainable management practice in my opinion. Mature rams have value to the group beyond their breeding ability. Anyone who has ever watched a group of rams knows how much the young ones rely on the experience of the older rams for guidance. A group of 3-5 rams moves as an infantry with a forward and rear flank. When they rest, rams set up so that all vulnerable approaches to their position are covered. When the only older ram is taken or a group of rams is reduced to less than 2-3 individuals, they can not offer each other as much protection and the remaining young rams are much more vulnerable to predation. They're downright lost, dumb, and senseless without the older ram. Rams in 19C can live for several more years by the time they reach full curl. The rams we have taken (beyond full curl), all but one still had good dentition, all were fat and healthy.
2. The current unlimited system incentivizes guides to take every legal ram that they can find for as many non-resident hunters as possible. At \$25k per hunt, a non-resident hunter expects to get a sheep. From the guide's perspective, if they don't take it, another guide and client will. They are not wrong. There is no incentive to leave a healthy full-curl ram to reach trophy size or to "self-regulate" when the population declines. We have watched the non-resident guided hunting pressure increase year after year. More permits for non-permanent structures, more remote landing strips, more air traffic, more non-resident hunters, and fewer sheep every year. Guided hunters are extremely effective at taking sheep: 90% of sheep killed last year being taken by non-resident guided hunters.
3. Resident hunters are driven by different priorities and are much more likely to "self-regulate". Resident hunters are much more likely not to take sheep when the sheep population declines. We see the trends and self-regulate to let the population rebound because we want the sheep to be there for our kids. We are not motivated by getting a sheep as much as getting out to hunt with our family and to foster an appreciation for hunting and the resident sheep population we

have come to know in the next generation. We want to be able to hunt with our family year after year, but not necessarily take a sheep every year.

- I can't tell you how disheartening it is to watch my daughter hike her tail off with me for a week, then decide to pass on a ram that is legal, but healthy and young enough to live another year so that it can get really big or continue to be the mentor for the younger rams, only to have a non-resident hunter fly in and take it within days.
- I have grown up hunting sheep in 19C with my 1st hunt at 12 years old with the agreement with my dad that we would not shoot anything. I went on several hunts, but did not kill a sheep until I was 35.
- In the last 20 years, my family and I have hunted sheep almost every season in 19C, but we have only taken 4 sheep between us. We have passed on far more nice legal rams than we have taken.
- As a youth hunter, my daughter passed on 3 beautiful rams before she was twelve.
- Our son went on 5 hunts before getting a nice ram at 11 years old.

4. Resident youth hunting grows the next generation of Alaska sportsmen/women and should be left open. The youth hunt has become a "right of passage" for our kids. Our 9 year old and 5 year old daughters are looking forward to their 10th birthdays when they will be eligible to be the hunter for the youth hunt. They know that they will likely only take one nice ram in their lifetime, so there is no rush to take the first legal ram that they see. Sheep hunting with kids is an incredible experience and extremely difficult to be successful. I suspect there would be very few rams taken per year if left open, but would allow Alaskan youth to continue to hunt and to be vested in the sheep of 19C.
5. An honest discussion must acknowledge that there are many factors at play in the declining sheep population: hard winters, a rebounding wolf population, black and grizzly bear predation, golden eagle predation on lambs, as well as resident and non-resident hunting pressure. Full closure to all hunting may not have as much impact on the sheep population as we hope given the magnitude of the other factors. **With non-resident hunters taking 90% of the sheep, closure to resident hunting is likely to have the least impact of all.**
6. A very limited permit-system rather than full closure to non-residents would allow resident guides to continue to maintain their livelihoods. Non-resident hunting in 19C has without a doubt gotten out of hand, but full closure would be very painful. Limiting non-residents to a few sheep per season would increase the value of each hunt & allow guides to continue to operate.

I strongly urge the board to reject proposal 204 as written, to place reasonable limits of non-resident hunters with a drawing permit system, and to allow resident and especially youth hunting to continue. **If, in the next few seasons, resident hunters abuse that system, then I would also support a once in a decade limit on sheep for residents and youth hunters.**

If the Board votes to approve proposal 204 with closure to hunting for all parties, then upon re-opening, non-resident hunters must be capped with a drawing permit system. A full closure to everyone for 5 years, followed by full opening to non-residents would put us right back where we started.

Respectfully,
Anna Deal