



Department of Fish and Game

DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
Headquarters

1255 West 8th Street
P.O. Box 115526
Juneau, Alaska 99811-5526
Main: 907.465.4190
Fax: 907.465.6142

November 9, 2023

An Agenda Change Request (ACR 1) has been submitted to the Alaska Board of Game requesting to change 5 AAC 92.990(a)(30). Definitions. The proponent is asking the board to change the definition of "full-curl horn" by repealing 5 AAC (a)(30)(C). This would mean that a ram will only qualify under the "full-curl horn or larger" hunt restriction if the tip of one horn has grown through 360 degrees of a circle, or if both horn tips are broken.

With respect to the board's Agenda Change Request (ACR) acceptance criteria (5 AAC 92.005):

- A. The department is unaware of any error in regulation.
- B. The department did not anticipate a significant increase in sublegal ram harvest when the regulation was adopted. With declines in sheep abundance, statewide, hunters may opt to harvest a sheep without full confidence that it is 8 years old.
- C. The department is unsure of the biological implications of increased harvest from younger age classes of rams. However, if a ram is harvested at six or seven years of age, it will not be available for harvest as an older ram. Sublegal take has increased, and decreasing sublegal take is desirable for several reasons, and will potentially result in additional rams being available for harvest in future years.
- D. The department is unaware of any unforeseen or unexpected events that would otherwise restrict or reduce a reasonable opportunity for customary and traditional wildlife uses as defined in AS 16.05.258(f).
- E. The department is unaware of any unexpected resource situation that would cause a biologically allowable resource harvest to be precluded by delayed regulatory action.

The requested change will no longer allow a sheep to meet the definition of "full-curl" by age. It is difficult to judge sheep by age in the field, which can result in sublegal sheep being harvested. Removing the age portion of the definition of a full-curl sheep will mean that a ram will only qualify as a legal animal under the "full-curl horn or larger" bag limit if the tip of one horn has grown through 360 degrees of a circle or if both horn tips are broken. Although sheep populations have cycled in the past, the magnitude and timeline of present declines warrant bringing the statewide discussion to the Board of Game ahead of the regular cycle.

The next regularly scheduled board meeting for Statewide regulations is during winter/spring of 2024/2025. The Department opines that this is the most appropriate time to have this discussion that has statewide implications. It is the Department's opinion that delaying action at this meeting would not result in a serious conservation concern.

If the board accepts this ACR, the department recommends the proposal come before the board at its March 2024 meeting in Fairbanks to allow for more public input.

Sincerely,

Ryan Scott

Ryan Scott
Acting Director
Division of Wildlife Conservation