

Record Copy For Eric Anslinger's testimony on 20A CUAs

RE: Eric Anslinger public comment March 16, 2024

Commissioner, Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Board,

I am submitting the Record Copy at the advisement of Commissioner Vincent-Lang. I will attempt to paint a clearer picture of what I believe needs to happen to not only increase resident hunter access, but also help meet the Department's harvest goals for moose in 20A.

I understand that there is a history of guide activity in the Wood River Controlled Use Area (CUA), mainly for Dall Sheep hunting. My goal is not to disturb those endeavors. Trails already exist in the Wood River CUA and would allow cheaper, safer, and more reliable access to the average resident hunter. Member Loring had brought up the Yanert CUA during questioning. While during the conversation I did think changing motorized access could be beneficial there, I have reviewed mapping of the area and the majority of the trail access is in the Ahtna owned corridor. While some public (state) access is open on the North side of the unit, I do not believe that the Yanert needs to be a point of focus at this time.

Mr. Virgil Umphenour mentioned during his testimony how few hunters that draw the DC827 tag actually hunt do to access issues. Opening up the Wood River CUA would allow Resident hunters more access in this area. There will most certainly be an argument that this will hurt the guides in the area. This simply is not true. 75% of tag winners are residents who do not use guides, but some may use air taxi or transporters. Even with motorized access some, if not most, will continue to do so to gain elevation with more ease. Caribou are not a guide required species and as such should have no sway in the argument against motorized usage. Non-residents will continue to require services of guides, transporters, and air taxis regardless of access opening. The logistics and cost of renting a truck, trailer, and ATV/SXS are so cumbersome and expensive that the commercial entities will not suffer.

To summarize, I believe the way forward is to open the Wood River CUA to motorized usage with the restriction of sheep hunting. I recommend the new verbiage for the restrictions of the Wood River CUA to read: "CLOSED TO THE USE OF ANY MOTOR VEHICLE, EXCEPT AIRCRAFT FOR SHEEP HUNTING INCLUDING TRANSPORTATION OF ANY SHEEP HUNTERS, THEIR GEAR, AND/OR PARTS OF SHEEP, AUG 1 - AUG 20". If the Department has concerns over sustainable yield for the Delta Caribou herd with increased access, then a return to the 100 draw tags being allocated would be welcomed. Currently 150 tags are available for the Delta Caribou herd. Over the last five years, only 100 hunters have hunted and they have had a 70% success in harvest.

Thank you for time and as always I appreciate the hard work this Board does for the people of Alaska. God Bless.