

**PROPOSAL 43**

**5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep.**

Change all general season sheep harvest tickets in Units 12, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26B, and 26C to registration permits, and allow hunters to obtain a registration permit once every two years as follows:

To address the issue of overcrowding, we propose that all general harvest ticket sheep hunts in Region III (including the youth hunt) be turned into a registration hunt. Within the registration hunt permit conditions, hunters would only be allowed to obtain the registration permit at a maximum of once every two years. Meaning, individual hunters would only be allowed to hunt sheep in Region III using the registration permit at a maximum frequency of every other year. Eligibility for draw sheep hunts would not be impacted by the registration permit, meaning hunters could obtain registration and draw permits within the same or subsequent years. Although our preference is to include all of Region III in the registration hunt, it could also be limited to just Unit 12.

We believe this solution would help reduce hunter crowding but the reduction in hunting opportunity would not impact all sheep hunters since not all hunters hunt every year. For example, of the 369 reported general harvest ticket sheep hunters in Unit 12 in fall 2021, 24% (88 hunters) also hunted sheep in Unit 12 in fall 2020.

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** There is overcrowding of sheep hunters which has cascading effects on hunt quality and aesthetics. This issue of overcrowding has been amplified by the current low numbers of sheep throughout much of Region III, which has pushed more hunters into the few areas where sheep numbers remained closer to long-term averages and has increased competition for the lower number of remaining legal rams in the areas where sheep numbers are low. Furthermore, crowding will increase as a result of the recent closure of Unit 19C to youth and nonresident hunters and the closure of portions of the Brooks Range to non-federally qualified subsistence users. Although we recognize that crowding is not a biological issue, it has impacts on hunt quality and aesthetics.

Our solution to this issue is to limit individuals to hunting sheep in general harvest ticket areas at a maximum frequency of once every two years via a registration permit hunt. Although we considered alternative solutions such as shorter seasons and drawing hunts, we feel this solution would best address the issue while retaining the most available open hunting opportunity. If no action is taken, we are concerned that federal closures to non-federally qualified users may be enacted throughout more of Region III, which will have negative impacts on many sheep hunters.

**PROPOSED BY:** Upper Tanana/Fortymile Fish and Game Advisory Committee (EG-F23-225)

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