SHEEP POPULATIONS, HUNTERS, AND HARVEST

a summary on current status and trends

21 November 2014, Anchorage
The information provided will be used to:

- Provide a resource for the Board of Game to develop regulations for the management and allocation of sheep harvest.

- Complement the information collected in the Alaska Sheep Hunter User Survey conducted by Dr. Todd Brinkman.

- Present information to help sheep hunters and others prepare proposal comments for the Board of Game.
The information addresses these concerns:

**Management**

- Hunter concerns about crowding
- Guide / Transporter / Resident hunter reported conflicts
- Public desire to change or modify sheep hunt management strategies

**BOG Proposals**

- To restrict nonresident hunting or expand resident opportunity
- To create additional drawing hunts or limit nonresidents to draw hunts
- To limit access and change bag limits and seasons
The report summarizes the following:

- Sheep population status
- Hunter and harvest numbers
- Hunting opportunities and access
- Harvest trend and characteristics
- Guide / commercial activities
RESIDENCY is divided into two categories

**RESIDENTS** – includes residents of Alaska who:
- do not hire commercial services
- hire transporters (state regulated)
- hire air taxis (FFA regulated)
- hire guides

**NONRESIDENTS** – includes nonresidents who:
- are citizens of the United States
- are not citizens of the United States
- Hire a guide and/or other commercial services
- hunt with second degree kindred relatives
The data are divided into 4 time periods

• **1972-1980** Pre-ANILCA - leading up to the loss of 25% of AK sheep hunting opportunity; ADF&G began formally collecting statewide sheep harvest information

• **1981-1988** Post-ANILCA - leading up to the 1988 Owsichek Decision that eliminated exclusive guide use areas in AK; the beginning of full-curl bag limit regulation

• **1989-2000** Post Owsichek Decision and statewide implementation of full-curl bag limit; there were declines in sheep hunter numbers during this period

• **2001-2013** Continued decline in sheep hunter numbers, sheep population declines in several areas due to severe weather events; new draw permit hunts in central Chugach Mountains; any-ram draw hunts offered for the first time
The data are also divided into eight major Sheep Range Areas

- Alaska Range EAST
- Alaska Range WEST
- Brooks Range
- Chugach Mountains
- Kenai Mountains
- Talkeetna Mountains, Chulitna-Watana Hills
- Tanana Hills, White Mountains
- Wrangell Mountains
Where are sheep found in Alaska?
Eight major sheep range areas in Alaska
What about the populations?
### Sheep Population trends across Alaska:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey and Inventory Report Area</th>
<th>Population Trend</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kenai Peninsula</td>
<td>Decreasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaska Range west</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Wrangell Mountains</td>
<td>Stable or Increasing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chugach Mountains</td>
<td>Stable at low levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentasta, Nutzotin, and N. Wrangells</td>
<td>Stable or Decreasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tok Management Area</td>
<td>Stable or Decreasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talkeetna Mtns., Chulitna-Watana Hills</td>
<td>Stable at low levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta Controlled Use Area</td>
<td>Stable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. AK Range, E. of Nenana Riv., W. of Delta Riv.</td>
<td>Stable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Mountains</td>
<td>Stable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanana Hills</td>
<td>Stable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Brooks Range</td>
<td>Decreasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Brooks Range</td>
<td>Decreasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Brooks Range</td>
<td>Decreasing</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Sheep Population</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>56,740 (53,900-62,400)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>50,850 (48,300-55,900)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>45,010 (42,800-49,500)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How many sheep hunters are there in Alaska?
The total number of sheep hunters has been declining over the last 20 years.
Where are the sheep hunting opportunities?
Sheep Hunt Types (opportunities) in Alaska

Sheep Hunt Types

- Registration Permit & General Season Hunts
- Drawing Permit Hunts
- General Season Hunts
- EO Closure*

* Closed by Emergency Order at this time
How many sheep are harvested?
The total sheep harvest has also been declining for over 20 years.
What kind of success rates did we see?
Nonresident success rates are most often twice that of residents.
How many days did it take to harvest a sheep?
There is not a lot of difference in the number of days hunted for successful hunters.
Most of the harvest occurs in the first 10 days for both residents and nonresidents.

1. August 10-14
2. August 15-20
3. August 21-31
4. September 1-10
5. September 11-20
How do sheep hunters get to the place where they start walking?
Residents use planes, ORVs, highway vehicles.
Nonresidents use planes and horses.
So what kind of commercial services do sheep hunters use?
Nonresidents typically hire guides and/or other commercial services.

RES AND NR COMMERCIAL SERVICES REPORTED 1989-2000

Mountain Range

Number of Hunters

- None
- Transport
- Registered Guide
- Other
RES AND NR COMMERCIAL SERVICES REPORTED 2001-2013

The majority of residents do not use commercial services.
Where are sheep hunters reporting guide services?
Use of Guide Services by Guide Use Area (GUA)

Average annual number of hunters who reported using guided commercial services for their sheep hunt during the three-year period RY10-RY12.

Source: Analysis of ADF&G sheep hunter harvest report data. Figure created by Joe Want (October 2014) and used by permission.
Non residents hunting with second-degree-kindred relatives

- Most of the range areas show NR sheep hunters reporting guides 70% or more or the time
- Other commercial use categories such as lodge/camp and other services are not well defined
- For the Tok Management Area (TMA), 20 to 25% of the NR draw applicants intend to hunt with relatives
SUMMARY

• Sheep populations in Alaska are currently considered to be stable or decreasing

• For over twenty years, there have been declines in the total number of hunters and number of sheep harvested

• Nonresident sheep hunter success rates are most often twice that of residents although there is very little difference in the number of days hunted between residents and nonresidents

• Over half of the total harvest occurs in the first 10 days of the season with a majority of this occurring in the first 5 days
SUMMARY continued

• Nonresident sheep hunters reported using airplanes and horses more often than other methods for access

• Residents reported using airplanes the most with ORVs and highway vehicles also used more often for access

• Most nonresident hunters hire guides and/or other commercial services while the majority of residents do not

• Residents that use commercial services hire transporters more than all other types
QUESTIONS ?
NEXT STEPS

- Review Board of Game Proposals  NOW - 30 JAN
- Review Survey and Sheep Reports  15 DEC – 30 JAN
- Prepare comments  NOW - 30 JAN
- ADF&G Advisory Comm. meetings  NOW – 12 FEB
- Submit Written Comments  NOW – 30 JAN
- Attend Board of Game Meeting  13 FEB – 20 FEB

Thank You