Proposal 203: Unit 23/26A Sheep

This proposal closes the Dall sheep seasons in Unit 23 and Unit 26A west of the Etivluk River drainage due to population decline

Department proposal
Proposal 203: AC Recommendations

Unit 23
- Kotzebue Sound AC: SUPPORT
- Noatak-Kivalina AC: SUPPORT
- N. Seward Peninsula AC: No Vote
- Lower Kobuk AC: No Vote
- Upper Kobuk AC: No Vote

Unit 26
- North Slope AC: SUPPORT
Proposed Closures: Units 23 and 26A

- De Long Mountains
- Baird Mountains
- Schwatka Mountains
- Etivluk River Drainage
Unit 23/26A Sheep ANS Finding

☞ De Long Mountains
   ANS = 0 – 9 sheep

☞ Baird Mountains
   ANS = 18 – 47 sheep

☞ Schwatka Mountains
   ANS = 2 – 4 sheep
Proposal 203: Sheep Regulations

De Long Mountains (Portions of Units 23 and 26A)

RESIDENT REGISTRATION:
1 sheep by registration permit Aug. 10 – Apr. 30
(Subsistence hunt only)

GENERAL SEASON DRAW:
1 ram with full curl or larger Aug. 10 – Sept. 20
by drawing permit when
harvestable surplus is
greater than 9 sheep

**Proposed regulation:** De Long Mountains (Unit 23 northern and western portion, and Unit 26A that portion west of Etivluk River **drainage**)  
RESIDENT REGISTRATION RS388: **No open season.**  
GENERAL SEASON DRAW: **No open season.**
Proposal 203: Sheep Regulations

Baird Mountains (Portions of Unit 23)

RESIDENT REGISTRATION (Not Issued**):  
1 sheep by registration permit Aug. 10 – Apr. 30  
(Subsistence hunt only)

GENERAL SEASON DRAW (Not Issued**):  
1 ram with full curl or larger Aug. 10 – Sept. 20  
by drawing permit when harvestable surplus is greater than 47 sheep

**Federal management and harvest has prevented State hunt since 1995.

Proposed regulation: Baird Mountains (Unit 23 southern and western portion)

RESIDENT REGISTRATION: No open season.

GENERAL SEASON DRAW: No open season.
Proposal 203: Sheep Regulations

Schwatka Mountains (Unit 23 Remainder)

RESIDENT REGISTRATION:
3 sheep by registration permit Aug. 1 – Apr. 30
(Subsistence hunt only)

GEN. SEASON HARVEST TICKET:
1 ram with full curl Aug. 10 – Sept. 20

Proposed regulation: Schwatka Mountains (Unit 23 Remainder)

RESIDENT REGISTRATION: No open season.
GEN. SEASON HARVEST TICKET: No open season.
Proposal 203: Sheep Regulations

Unit 26A east of Etivluk River, excluding Gates of the Arctic National Park

RESIDENT REGISTRATION:
3 sheep by registration permit Aug. 1 – Apr. 30
(Subsistence hunt only)

GEN. SEASON HARVEST TICKET:
1 ram with full curl or larger Aug. 10 – Sept. 20

**Proposed regulation:** Unit 26A, that portion east of and including the Etivluk River drainage excluding Gates of the Arctic National Park

RESIDENT REGISTRATION:
3 sheep by registration permit Aug. 1 – Apr. 30
(Subsistence hunt only)

GEN. SEASON HARVEST TICKET:
1 ram with full curl or larger Aug. 10 – Sept. 20
Proposal 203: Sheep Regulations

Unit 26A, that portion within Gates of the Arctic National Park

GEN. SEASON HARVEST TICKET:
3 sheep Aug. 1 – Apr. 30

Proposed regulation: No change

GEN. SEASON HARVEST TICKET:
3 sheep Aug. 1 – Apr. 30
Sheep Population Summary

Marginal habitat, edge of range – supports low populations

Minimal exchange - discontinuous populations

Winter mortality early 1990s – all seasons closed

Slow recovery to 2009 – about 80% of previous numbers

Winter mortality 2014 – extensive icing in western ranges

Declines of 50-80% – varies by area, similar to mid-1990s
De Long Mountains Population

2014 preliminary estimate is 359 sheep
80% decline since 2011

Ram: “ewe-likes” ratio (2011, 2014)
Declined from 35 to 33 rams:100 “ewe-likes”

Large ram ratio (2011, 2014)
Declined from 3 to 2 rams:100 “ewe-likes”

Lamb ratio (2011, 2014)
Declined from 8 to 4:100 “ewe-likes”.
2014 preliminary estimate is 309 sheep
50% decline since 2011 (n= 587 sheep)
63% decline since 2009 (n= 823 sheep)

Changed from 36 to 21 to 23:100 “ewe-likes” sheep

Large ram ratio (2009, 2011, 2014)
Declined from 7 to 3 to 1 rams:100 “ewe-likes” sheep

Declined from 33 to 23 to 2:100 “ewe-likes” sheep
2014 lamb recruitment was the lowest on record
Much lower than 7:100 “ewe-likes” observed in 1991
Prior to recent winter mort events, lamb ratios were
30:100 “ewe-likes” in 1989
33:100 “ewe-likes” in 2009
Sheep Abundance

Baird Mountains

Unit 23: Slide 14
Schwatka Mountains Population

2014 preliminary estimate - not surveyed
Surveys in 2014 show declines within GAAR;

2014 Itkillik Area preliminary estimate is 646 sheep
60% decline since 2011 (n = 1,669 sheep)
Itkillik Area is a comparative area to east
Schwatka Mountains likely similarly affected

Ram: “ewe-likes” ratio (2011, 2014)
38 to 70 rams:100 “ewe-likes” sheep
Ratio influenced by 60% reduction in “ewe-likes”
Effects of low recruitment for several years
Ram count decreased 27% from 335 to 244 rams

Large ram ratio (no data)

Lamb ratio (2011, 2014)
Declined from 25 to 11:100 “ewe-likes” sheep
## Harvest Summary

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<th>Regulatory year</th>
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<th>De Long Mtns</th>
<th>Schwatka Mtns</th>
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**Amount Necessary for Subsistence (ANS)**

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Harvest Summary

Baird Mountains (2004 – 2011)
Average harvest was 2% of ewes
Average harvest was 14% of rams

De Long Mountains (2011)
Based on ratios, very low numbers of full curl rams
Full curl hunter success is expected to be negligible
90% decline in lambs yields minimal recruitment

Registration permit hunts (RS388 and RS389)
Take of ‘any sheep’ (current bag limit) is ill-advised
Negative impacts on population recovery

Department recommendation
Close all hunting seasons (low numbers of sheep)
Promote population recovery
Sheep Harvest Chart

Unknown Area
De Long Mts
Baird Mts

Number of Sheep Taken

Regulatory Year

RY90
RY91
RY92
RY93
RY94
RY95
RY96
RY97
RY98
RY99
RY00
RY01
RY02
RY03
RY04
RY05
RY06
RY07
RY08
RY09
RY10
RY11
RY12
RY13

Unit 23: Slide 18
Summary of Closures

- Affects all state hunts (general season, subsistence) in Unit 23 and Unit 26A west of Etivluk River drainage
  - De Long Mountains in Units 23 and 26A
  - Baird Mountains in Unit 23
  - Schwatka Mountains in Unit 23

- General season closures affect residents and nonresidents hunting by harvest ticket or drawing permit

- Subsistence hunt closures affect registration permits
  - RS388 (De Long Mountains, residents only)
  - RS389 (Schwatka Mountains, residents only)

- Populations will be monitored and when harvests can be sustained; a proposal to restore hunting opportunity will be prepared by the department
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