PROPOSAL 74 – **5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep.** Remove the nonresident bag limit restriction of one Dall sheep every four years in the Central/Southwest Region as follows:

My proposal is to change the nonresident restriction "one ram every four regulatory years" to "one ram every regulatory year." Stated in regulatory language:

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

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS: 1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, [EVERY 4 REGULATORY YEARS]

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? I would like to address the regulation within 5 AAC 85.055 that currently only allows nonresidents to harvest one Dall sheep every four years. Roughly 80% of all sheep hunters in Alaska on any given year are on their first or second sheep hunt. Roughly 60% of all sheep hunters are on their first sheep hunt. Data from ADF&G shows that most Dall sheep harvested in Alaska every year were taken by novice sheep hunters, regardless of residency.

Few people actually report hunting sheep multiple times over the years. The heated topics and issues surrounding Dall sheep hunting truly is a problem of the few. However, those few are very passionate. Their desires and dreams are filled with the persistent thoughts of returning to the mountains, in pursuit of those majestic animals. This passion is the very reason why those hunters should be allowed the freedom to continue and pursue their dreams.

The only people who are excluded from returning to hunt Dall sheep are those nonresidents who successfully harvested a sheep in Alaska in the prior three years. Residents who have successfully taken sheep are not excluded from hunting again. Just because a nonresident hunter has had success in the past, he or she should not be excluded from further opportunity.

For those who believe their own chances of taking a Dall sheep will improve by further restrictions of nonresidents, I believe they are misguided. To borrow a quote from Jack O'Connor, "This is no game for the weak-kneed and faint-hearted. Hunter success is not high, not because there aren't enough sheep but because there aren't enough people with the temperament to become sheep hunters." – *The Bighorn, March 1960.* Alaska is the only state in America that does not severely restrict sheep tags to its own residents. Residents of Alaska may go sheep hunting every single year, and it should remain this way. But restricting a few nonresidents does nothing to improve an individual's sheep hunting abilities.

Furthermore, there will be very limited impact of allowing these nonresident hunters to return to the mountains. According to data from ADF&G, for the 16 hunting seasons spanning from 2000–2015, there were 24,164 hunters who reported hunting sheep a total of 42,150 times. If we look at just the total number of nonresidents who attempted another hunt within a four year period after successfully taking a sheep, there was a total of 211. This includes both those guided, and those hunting with second degree Alaskan family. However, how many of these hunters successfully took another sheep within that four-year window? 135, most of which came

from repeat guided clients. That comes out to 8.4 sheep per year, statewide! Stated another way, this is about one sheep saved per mountain range where sheep exist in Alaska. This level of "conservation" is laughable at best.

With a population of sheep somewhere around 45,000 statewide, and the literature showing repeated natural population fluctuations, both increasing and decreasing, of 28–35% in one to three year periods over areas of the Alaska Range (Arthur 2003) and Canada (Hoefs and Bayer 1983), the "normal" fluctuation statewide would be expected to be about 12,600–15,700 sheep. Not allowing these few passionate hunters to harvest 8.4 sheep per year on a conservation basis is inconsequential. Therefore, please consider allowing a nonresident hunter the opportunity to continue to hunt Dall sheep each year.

PROPOSED BY: Chris Harper   (EG-F17-050)
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