

RC010

November 1, 2017

Dear Members of the Board of Game,

I write to you from the state of Colorado with a heavy heart, asking for a minute of your time and for your consideration. I am part of an often-maligned group of hunters who come to Alaska each year: the 2<sup>nd</sup> degree kindred nonresident. In recent years, I find that there has been an immense interest in altering nonresident hunting opportunity, including that of the nonresident relatives. Since we are a very underrepresented group, please allow me to share a few points that I hope will resonate not only with you, but with many Alaskans alike.

First, I consider myself first and foremost an Alaskan above all other designations. I was born and raised in this great state. It is, and always will be, my home. But like so many people before me, whose life path has meandered beyond the borders, I do not currently reside there. My heart is there, but my body isn't. While in time this may change and I may come home, for now I find myself looking in from afar.

So it was for me, when in 2016 I learned of the Board's decision to restrict nonresidents to 1 ram every 4 years. I was crushed. I still am. Some of the most wonderful and memorable times I have ever had were with my family in Alaska, hunting Dall Sheep. The opportunity to continue this pursuit as a technical nonresident has strengthened family bonds, and produced lasting memories over the years. Being able to get a sheep tag in the immediate years following a successful harvest usually does not produce another harvest. Both my personal history and the data from filed hunt reports with the Department of Fish and Game will prove this. It is still sheep hunting, after all. But taking away the possibility ruins the dreams, and changes the nature of how a hunt feels to all those involved.

But no one appears to care enough about this to even reexamine this new law. Why should they? If it doesn't directly affect them, then why should Alaskans care? Sounds good to a lot of people, right? Yea, limit the nonresidents! More for us! They are wrong, and they have been misled.

One of the biggest points I would like you to consider is that these new limitations on nonresidents, especially next of kin hunters, is not really about sheep in the end. It is about hunting all of Alaska's wildlife, and being able to do so with family. These rules will be used as examples for future regulatory endeavors. It may start with sheep, goats, and brown bears, but what's next? If you believe that the restrictive allocative push will end there, I wish I shared your naivety. It will be a sad day when we look back and realize that for all species, we have chosen to disregard the shared family experience. I can only imagine the abundance of Alaskans who have close family living out of state, who relish the chance at shared adventure. Why regulate that?

In recent years, there has been an increasingly upsetting trend of entitlement and exclusion coming from within the state. As you are well aware, the Board of Game is asked to consider seemingly endless proposals to restrict nonresident allocations, with no end in sight. It is painful for me to read through the multitude of proposals, many of which are aimed at nothing other than taking opportunity away from all but those writing the proposals. Facts are skewed and misrepresented. Conservation is a term of convenience. Please allow me to share some facts that seem to be disregarded in the main rhetoric, and will add evidence that these proposals are based on beliefs and not actual facts:

- Consider the relatively recent adoption in unit 14C to limit the nonresidents to 10% of sheep tags: those proposing and considering the new regulation did not do their homework. Nonresidents do not comprise 10% of the applicant pool. By "limiting" nonresidents to 10%, they effectively increased the nonresident allocation.
- Examining all of the filed sheep hunt reports for 16 years, from 2000-2015, we find:
  - o Number of nonresidents (all nonresidents, both guided and resident relatives) who hunted again within 4 years after killing a sheep: 211. That's 13.2 hunters per year, statewide.
  - o Number of nonresidents (all nonresidents, both guided and resident relatives) who killed another sheep within those 4 years: 135. That's 8.4 sheep per year, statewide. To put this in perspective, that's an average of about 1 sheep per mountain range per year!
  - o Number of 2<sup>nd</sup> degree kindred nonresidents who returned to hunt within 4 years after killing a sheep: 45. That's 2.8 hunters per year.
  - o Number of 2<sup>nd</sup> degree kindred nonresidents who killed another sheep within those 4 years: 22. That's almost 1.4 sheep per year, statewide.
  - o As you can see, with a statewide population of 45,000 sheep, and considering the magnitude of natural mortality each year, the 1-in-4 nonresident restriction does practically nothing. But who cares, there's only a few of us? How much trouble can we be? This is not ethical reasoning to keep this restriction in place.
  - o The vast majority of successful Dall Sheep hunters, after a first kill, do not ever hunt Dall Sheep again. Aiming regulations at repeat hunters for sheep will continue to be ineffective.

Alaska residents are not limited in hunting opportunity. They may obtain a sheep tag every single year. Apparently, they blame lack of success on nonresidents, not their own sheep hunting efforts and abilities. Limiting nonresidents does little to make them better sheep hunters, but it apparently makes them feel better. The Germans have a word for this: *schadenfreude*. It refers to the pleasure derived by someone from another person's misfortune.

Many of the proposals to limit nonresident hunting, especially when it comes to sheep, are based on a situation that does not exist in Alaska. I believe these proposals stem in part from how other states run their tag allocations. While it varies from state to state, the most common theme for bighorn sheep appears to be limiting nonresidents to around 10% of available tags. So why not apply the same rationale to Alaska's tags? The situation in Alaska is completely different. Let's take Colorado as an example. This year, Colorado, which has one of the highest numbers of sheep tags available the Rocky Mountain region, had 17,739 applicants for 296 sheep tags, including ewes. With such abysmal odds, many Colorado residents will never get a chance to hunt sheep in their lifetime. Even when they limit nonresidents to 10% of tags available, their own residents are still severely limited. Contrast this to Alaska, in which residents may get a tag every single year. Nonresidents are simply not limiting opportunity for Alaskan residents, despite that widespread belief. Alaska is in a unique position to offer opportunity unmatched anywhere else at this time.

Lastly, the proposals I have submitted seem to be misinterpreted, as I see from the advisory comments and ADF&G comments written on them. Perhaps this is my fault for not explaining better.

- On proposal 35, I do not wish to change any allocation in permits. I am trying to improve drawing regulations for regions such as unit 14C. I cannot apply for a 14C hunt with my family as a party hunt, since resident and nonresident hunt numbers are different. 241 and 141, for example are exactly the same hunt, but we cannot link them on an application due to the numbers being different. I am proposing that if we apply together as a party, and get drawn when tags in each resident/nonresident pool are still available, then we should both get tags from those respective pools.
- As far as proposal 40, I am not trying to address the TMA whatsoever. TMA drawing limitations (1 ram in 4 years) apply to all and I have no issue with them. I am advocating that since drawing tags for sheep in general are so rare to get, a previously successful hunter on a general harvest ticket should not be excluded for applying for these tags.

Please reconsider removing the nonresident restriction of 1 ram every 4 years. I thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Chris Harper