

PROPOSAL 110

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

Create an archery only registration hunt and youth hunt for sheep in Unit 7 Remainder as follows:

Unit 7 Remainder:

One ram with full curl horn or larger by **Bow and Arrow for certified bowhunters** only; August 10 - September 20.

One ram with full curl horn or larger, by **Bow and Arrow only for certified bowhunters**. Youth hunt only; August 1 - 5.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Over the past decade the Unit 7 sheep harvest has decreased to 1 - 3 rams harvested on average per year and about 40 hunters per year hunting the area. In addition, the average ram size ranges in the low to mid 30” range suggesting that rams are being harvested shortly after they first reach legal size. In addition, there is currently no archery sheep hunting area in the entire state of Alaska aside from a narrow corridor along the Dalton highway, very far from where most hunters live. Creating an archery only sheep hunting area would have multiple benefits.

First, it would allow for a place for hunters to safely hunt sheep with a bow without worry of long range shooters shooting over them while stalking. Archery hunters would also much less likely to interrupt each other while on a stalk or approach due the increased observation time and stalking time required.

Second, the existing archery registration hunts, in areas with high concentrations of rams and easy access, have consistently shown that archery sheep hunts allow for increased hunter opportunity while having very little affect on actual sheep populations. This would allow for rams to grow older on average increasing horn size and increasing age diversity in the population. (Of note, research is currently underway in in Alaska to determine if there is a population benefit from having larger numbers of rams and older rams.)

Third, much of Unit 7 is composed of very high use trails and waterways and limiting hunting to short range weapons in this areas will decrease potential or user conflict. Archery hunts have been used with good success in other parts of the state that are more heavily used with good community acceptance.

Fourth, there is a precedent in British Columbia and Alberta for archery only sheep hunting areas and both remain very popular as places where hunters can enjoy the adventure of sheep hunting with a bow each year with opportunities at legal rams in relative proximity to road systems and populated areas.

Fifth, after a few years of archery only seasons and the subsequent increase in survival of mature rams, this hunt would likely become very popular with sheep hunters, many of whom would welcome the chance to challenge themselves by hunting with archery equipment. This could potentially draw pressure off of other units where sheep populations are known to be suffering and hunter conflict has become more common.

PROPOSED BY: Paul Forward

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