

## **PROPOSAL 119**

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

Set the sheep bag limit in Unit 12 for resident hunters based on the age of the ram harvested as follows:

Ideally the below regulation would also apply to hunting guides who would have to skip a season or more of guiding if their clients kill a ram under 8-years of age.

Unit 12 Resident:

Harvest of a ram 8-years-old or older and hunter will be eligible to hunt sheep the next season.

Harvest a 7-year-old ram, the hunter will be ineligible to hunt sheep for the next two seasons.

Harvest a 6-year or younger ram, and the hunter will be ineligible to hunt sheep for the next three seasons.

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** In recent years there has been widespread concern raised about the harvesting of young rams during full-curl management (FCM) sheep hunts throughout Alaska. During the emergency meeting last October and during my multiple conversations with sheep biologists both in Alaska and BC, consistent concerns have been raised that harvesting younger rams has an adverse affect on the sheep population. Alaska's sheep population has been noted to be on a steady decline and it's time for hunter/conservationists to take some responsibility to do everything possible to conserve sheep.

Because of this decrease the Board of Game (BOG) adopted Proposal 204 in at the 2022/2023 meeting cycle which imposes a five year moratorium on nonresident hunters in this area. This is a step in the right direction but our biologists are telling us that due to climate change, the conditions that have led to this sheep decline will not be changing in a meaningful way. Unlike previous sheep declines which bounced back after a decade or two, this decline is very likely only the beginning of an essentially irreversible trend. It is up to us to find ways to conserve the sheep population with a focus on long term, sustainable practices.

Because of this we need to look at other creative options to maintain our sheep population. One area of improvement could be to focus more on harvesting older rams. Unfortunately, in recent years there is a concerning trend toward younger rams being killed. In Unit 19C the average age of rams killed was under 8-years-old and if a few old outliers are removed from the from then ~50 or so rams killed when calculating, the average age of a sheep killed is under 7.5 years with a concerning number of 6 and even a 5-year-old ram having been killed. (In Unit 12 recent harvest statistics show an average age of around 7.2-years-old in 2022.) This suggests that a large number of the total mature ram population is being killed, potentially leaving a much smaller potential breeding population.

Of note, this regulation does not change FCM regulation. Shooting a full curl 7-year-old ram, for example, will not be illegal but will only result in some suspended hunting privileges. This is akin to some of the laws proposed and adopted in some places for shooting nannies instead of billy mountain goats.

**PROPOSED BY:** Paul Forward

(EG-F23-286)

\*\*\*\*\*