

PROPOSAL 73

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

Change the bag limit for sheep in Unit 14A draw hunts to any ram as follows:

This proposal would change the bag limit for Dall sheep in Unit 14A south and east of Matanuska River from one ram with full-curl horns or larger, both horns broken, or at least eight-years-old, to one ram.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The issue is reduced sheep hunter satisfaction and harvest opportunity. Many new and inexperienced sheep hunters are less likely to participate because of challenges with judging legal full-curl rams. Previously, many of the any-ram sheep hunters reported high satisfaction and less stress when not having to "be 100% sure" of shooting what they believe to be a legal ram. In addition, ADF&G staff have reported recent increased take of sub-legal rams (statewide) under full-curl bag limits concurrent with reduced overall sheep populations. The any-ram bag-limit is a positive alternative to full-curl and is entirely manageable and appropriate under a regulated drawing hunt by setting permit levels based on population survey data and observed mature ram numbers. Sheep hunters participating in any-ram hunts still prefer older-aged rams and generally take more older rams (>4 yrs) which may be more closely simulating natural mortality in the ram component of the population. Having a few limited sheep drawing hunts with this type of bag limit benefits both sheep hunters and ADF&G by providing unique draw hunt opportunity, increased hunter satisfaction, and reduced sub-legal harvest.

According to ADF&G, more people applied for the Unit 14A any-ram drawing hunts than any other sheep draw hunts available in Alaska except for the Tok Management Area (TMA) draw hunts (currently significantly reduced due to population issues). Even for a limited number of sheep draw hunts - in this case Unit 14A - the any-ram bag limit would provide a popular alternative for sheep hunters and address current concerns regarding sub-legal harvest, both of which increase hunter satisfaction and meet department goals (reduce sub-legal harvest and increase hunter satisfaction).

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local fish and game advisory committee? As of this date I have not coordinated with others regarding the proposal. Earlier, I consulted with ADF&G staff regarding current trends. I plan to discuss the proposal with the Mat Valley Fish and Game Advisory Committee and possibly other advisory committees when they resume meeting in the fall.

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