

PROPOSAL 42

5 AAC 85.030. Hunting seasons and bag limits for deer.

Change the nonresident start date for the deer hunting season in Unit 2, to August 15 as follows:

What solution do you recommend? In other words, if the board adopted your solution, what would the new regulation say?

Proposal: Change the start date for deer in Unit 2 for nonresidents to August 15.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?

The Sitka Blacktail deer population on Prince of Wales Island (PoW) crashed in 2017, 2018 & 2019. This was due to increasingly degraded forest habitat related to past timber harvest and the increase in the wolf population from 2015-2019. The broad loss of old growth forest habitat in central and north PoW has had a notable reduction on the ability of the landscape to produce and support deer. The value of old growth forest habitat to a healthy deer population can not be overstated. This loss of quality habitat and the consequential increase in the number one predator of deer (wolves) has significantly depleted the PoW deer population.

Factors affecting the PoW deer herd are; habitat loss, wolf and black bear predation and human predation resulting from the most liberal deer hunting season in the state and likely in the US. If you are a resident of PoW and are hunting under federal regs, the deer hunting season is July 25-Jan. 31. If you are a nonresident, the deer hunting season is Aug. 1-Dec. 31. The current deer hunting state bag limit for residents/nonresidents is four bucks.

Our deer herd is depressed enough that we feel it is reasonable to limit the nonresident hunters. Unit 2 only has three big game animals; wolf, black bear and deer. The year-round residents of PoW heavily rely on deer to feed our families. PoW grocery stores are limited to Craig, Klawock and Thorne Bay. This drives our grocery prices higher than other areas in Southeast AK and many other places in Alaska. Ketchikan was recently granted a rural designation and will be able to harvest under subsistence regulations, thereby competing with residents of PoW for our deer and other resources.

Nonresidents come to PoW for an Alaskan adventure and the opportunity to harvest a mature Sitka Blacktail deer that arguably, have larger antlers for the species than anywhere else in the world. Nonresident hunters do not need the meat like locals/residents. Non-res hunters can also hunt black bear and fish during the hunting season, so there are plenty of other adventures for them to partake in after they tag out on their one buck. The Aug. 15 start date for nonresidents will allow resident hunters the opportunity to harvest bucks above treeline (alpine) without the increased competition from non-resident hunters. This reduction will hopefully be temporary until our deer herd rebounds.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local fish and game advisory committee?

The Craig AC members developed this proposal with input from other Unit 2 residents. We have noticed and are concerned about the steady and significant decline in deer numbers and their availability for subsistence food resources. Scientific publications depicting trends of concern about the deer of PoW can be found at www.sitkablacktaildeer.org.

PROPOSED BY: Craig Fish and Game Advisory Committee

(OI-F25-040)
