

Proposal 104

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

Re-open Unit 19C to resident general sheep hunting opportunity, keep nonresidents on a draw permit system as follows:

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

A general sheep season for residents in Unit 19C should again be allowed. There is a harvestable surplus of rams in Unit 19C for a general season resident sheep hunt according to the Department, which poses no sheep conservation concerns at this time. Nonresident sheep hunting should be draw-permit only with a limited allocation.

Unit 19C Sheep

Residents: One ram with full-curl horn or larger by Harvest Ticket Aug 10 – Sept 20

Nonresidents: One ram with full-curl horn or larger every four regulatory years by draw permit Aug 10 – Sept 20 (up-to 10 permits) until a Guide Concession Program is implemented

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

LOSS OF RESIDENT SHEEP HUNTING OPPORTUNITY IN UNIT 19C

At the March, 2025, Statewide Board of Game Meeting, when the board was deliberating Proposal 190 that would shut down resident sheep hunting opportunity in Unit 19C for the 2025 fall season and in 2026 put resident and nonresident sheep hunters on a draw permit system, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (Department) told the board that there was a harvestable surplus of sheep in Unit 19C for residents under a general season hunt, and that they had no conservation concerns over continued resident general sheep hunting opportunity in the unit, even though the sheep population was in decline..

The board had already closed Unit 19C in 2023 to all nonresident sheep hunting opportunity due to conservation concerns that arose after the board allowed unlimited nonresident sheep hunting opportunity that resulted in nonresident guided hunters taking 90 percent of the sheep harvest in 2022 from the declining sheep population.

At that time, and previously, the board stated that the problem was “too many guides” in the unit, not their allowance of unlimited sheep hunting opportunity for nonresidents who are required to hire a guide. Whether the problem was too many guides, or too many nonresident sheep hunters, the board’s conservation concerns related to what they believed was an overharvest of sheep in Unit 19C by nonresident guided hunters. Resident sheep hunters never posed a sheep conservation concern.

The board’s decision in 2025 to shut down the resident sheep season in 19C, and make it a draw hunt for both residents and nonresidents starting in 2026, had a caveat that general sheep hunting opportunity in 19C for residents and nonresidents would only be allowed in the future if

there were limits on guides via a Guide Concession Program (GCP) the legislature authorized during the 2025 session (SB 73) which could be implemented as a test program in a unit of the board's choosing

Why are resident sheep hunters bearing the burden of this closure and subsequent draw hunts when the Department says there are no sheep conservation concerns with continued resident general sheep hunting opportunity, and the board has determined that the problem was too many guides? Why is resident general sheep hunting opportunity in the future dependent on limiting guides? What the board is really alluding is that if guides are not limited in 19C there will continue to be an overharvest of sheep from a declining sheep population by nonresident guided hunters.

The only sheep hunters in Unit 19C that need to be on a draw permit system before guides are limited are nonresidents.

Unit 19C Guide Concession Program & Timeline

The board passed a proposal in March of 2025 that would implement a GCP in Unit 19C, however, the Department of Law stated that the way the board adopted that proposal was not legal, and a new proposal must come forth in 2027 to designate Unit 19C as the first area where a test GCP will be implemented.

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has hired one additional employee for the GCP but the Department has not received the funds allocated by SB 73 to hire additional staff deemed necessary for their role in the GCP. Realistically, we are likely looking at a minimum of three years from the time the board passes a GCP proposal in 2027 before the program would be in place and implemented.

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

Yes, the Fairbanks AC developed this proposal.

PROPOSED BY: Fairbanks Fish & Game Advisory Committee

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