

Proposal 105

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

Re-open Unit 19C to resident general sheep hunting opportunity, but keep nonresidents on a draw permit system with limited allocation until a GCP is implemented as follows:

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

Re-open Unit 19C to resident general sheep hunting opportunity

Keep nonresidents on a draw permit system with limited allocation until a GCP is implemented

Unit 19C Sheep Residents

Aug 10 – Sept 20

One ram with full-curl horn or larger (OTC permit)

Unit 19C Sheep Nonresidents Aug 10 – Sept 20

One ram with full-curl horn or larger every four regulatory years by draw permit only Up to 4 permits

When/if a Guide Concession Program is implemented in Unit 19C, nonresident sheep hunters will go off draw permit and be able to hunt under an OTC permit.

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

Sheep Declines in Unit 19C, Resident Loss of Opportunity, Guide Concession Program

For several cycles, Resident Hunters of Alaska (RHAK) submitted proposals to limit nonresident sheep hunters in Unit 19C due to high nonresident harvest rates, a declining sheep population, and fears that residents would lose sheep hunting opportunity if the board did not limit nonresident sheep hunters.

Every one of our proposals was voted down, with the board using the rationale that under full-curl harvest management, there were no conservation concerns (even with low sheep numbers) with continued unlimited nonresident sheep hunting opportunity. The board admitted all along that there were problems, but they said the problems stemmed from unlimited guides in the unit, not the unlimited opportunity they gave to nonresident sheep hunters who must be guided.

This entire decade and more of us submitting proposals and them being voted down, only for the board to eventually say there were sheep conservation concerns in Unit 19C due to no limits on guides (i.e. unlimited nonresident opportunity) has been disheartening to say the least.

Resident sheep hunters are now on a draw system for Unit 19C sheep, with 16 permits being issued. Residents *did* end up losing sheep hunting opportunity, just like we feared due to inaction by the board to limit the nonresident component.

Residents will not gain general season OTC opportunity again until a Guide Concession Program (GCP) is implemented. The board has not even chosen an area yet for the initial experimental GCP that can only be implemented in one Unit. ADFG does not have the funding for their role in a GCP. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has hired one person for their role in the GCP but they have told us that the earliest they see a GCP being implemented is at least 3 years out from the time the board chooses an area.

This whole thing is flat-out ridiculous that the board would allow unlimited nonresident sheep hunting opportunity in an area they knew had drastic sheep declines and allow nonresidents to harvest 90 percent of the sheep the last year it was open to everyone. Resident sheep hunters should not have to bear the burden of lost opportunity when all along they were not a part of the problem.

Tying resident opportunity to a program to limit guides is also just ridiculous. What do guides have to do with resident sheep hunting opportunity? Why does no limits on guides lead to a resident sheep hunting closure? It's the board's job to use their authority to fix problems, not delay for over a decade when they could have fixed the problem all along by limiting nonresident sheep hunters, which in turn limits the number of guides.

The reason we are here now with Unit 19C being a draw-only hunt for residents until a GCP is implemented in the unit is because the board had a preferred option that was best for the guide industry. They chose that option and delayed acting for over a decade, rather than doing what was best for the sheep and resident sheep hunters all along.

Residents should be allowed general season OTC sheep hunting opportunity in Unit 19C again. ***Resident sheep hunters should not have to wait until guides in the unit are limited to hunt again under a general season.***

The board's rationale on this matter makes no sense when you really think about it. "We can't let residents hunt sheep under a general season because there are too many guides." "Too many sheep will be taken if we don't limit guides."

What kind of state do we live in whereby guides and the guide industry can negatively affect resident sheep hunting opportunity? To say we are disappointed is a gross understatement. We are angry! This kind of thing should never be allowed to happen! No other state would allow it to happen except Alaska, where we cater to the guide industry in ways that make no sense. It is not the board's job to provide stability to the guide industry!

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

PROPOSED BY: Resident Hunters of Alaska

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