

FeedbAK RHAK

Resident Hunters of Alaska

Sheep Issues

Reports from sheep hunters across the state this past fall were dismal in terms of the overall number of sheep and full-curl rams seen. Preliminary data from ADFG shows a total 2021 statewide harvest of 474 rams (not including subsistence hunts), the lowest on record. 2020 total sheep harvest was 650.

In conjunction with declines, over 10 percent of the sheep going through the Anchorage F&G office were sub-legal, evenly split between guided and unguided hunters.

The record snows of the 2011-2012 winter and the late spring in 2014 led to declines and few 8-year-old rams in the harvest this past fall. Overall, though, warmer and wetter winters due to a changing climate are negatively impacting our Dall sheep populations and will in future lead to less carrying capacity. Add to that predation, avalanches, drownings, and sheep are just not rebounding, even in areas with limited draw-only hunting opportunities. The situation in the Tok Management Area has become serious enough that only 10 tags will be available in 2022.

We have long been especially concerned with the 19C and 20A sheep populations and the continued high percentage of the harvest by unlimited nonresident guided hunters in those areas. The same situation prevailed in the Chugach for years and yet the Board of Game did nothing to limit nonresident sheep hunters until the situation was dire enough that it led to the board instituting draw hunts for all. This is exactly what we have long feared would happen in Units 19C and 20A.

The situation in 19C especially needs to be addressed, and RHAK submitted an Agenda Change Request (ACR) to the Board of Game – to consider at the 2022 Central/Southwest or Statewide meetings – asking to place limits on nonresident sheep hunters in 19C. You can read the ACR at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/regulations/regprocess/gameboard/pdfs/2021-2022/acr/acr4.pdf>.

It should be set in stone that before the Board can limit any resident hunting opportunities for any species, that if any nonresident hunting is allowed, that component must be the first to be limited or restricted.



RJ Stumpf and son Cole, youth sheep hunt

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RHAK Fair Seminars & Membership Drive Raffle

RHAK held a couple seminars at our Tanana Valley State Fair booth this summer, in conjunction with our Fair membership drive raffle. Mark Richards and his son, Keane, gave a Birch Bark Basket-making seminar with all the participants coming away with their very own folded watertight birch bark basket.

Mark also gave a video presentation on Accessing the Backcountry with a Canoe, showing participants how to line and pole a canoe upstream. Congratulations to the winners of our Membership Drive Raffle! A youth .22 rifle and four Sportsman's Warehouse gift cards were awarded to new and renewing members.



Happy kids with their birch bark baskets

Demonstrating how to line a canoe upstream



Board of Game Appointments

RHAK always makes recommendations for BOG seats to the Governor, Boards & Commissions, and legislators. During the last appointment cycle, we had recommended the reappointments of Tom Lamal (RHAK former board member from Fairbanks), Chairman Larry Van Daele (former ADFG biologist and Southcentral Regional Supervisor from Kodiak), and Stosh Hoffman (retired guide from Bethel). We also made recommendations for an upcoming vacancy.

The Governor chose to only reappoint Mr. Hoffman, and then appointed two more guides – Jake Fletcher & Lynn Keogh – to fill Mr. Lamal's and Mr. Van Daele's seats.

The RHAK board interviewed Mr. Keogh, who previously served on the BOG, and all came away with high regards and respect for his long-time trapping, fishing, and hunting background, and of him personally. But after much discussion, the consensus was that supporting even one more guide on the board – we had supported Al Barrette, a guide from Fairbanks, during the last cycle – was not in the best interests of resident hunters.

We made it clear that our opposition to Mr. Keogh's and Mr. Fletcher's appointments was solely about the two men

both being licensed big game guides, and that if confirmed their addition would make for 3 guides and one retired guide on the seven-member board, unfairly slanting the board in favor of commercial interests.

We want to thank all the RHAK members who got involved in sending letters and calling in to oppose these appointments during the last legislative session. Unfortunately, we were not successful.

There was one remaining vacant seat that the Governor chose to fill after the statutory deadline to fill a vacant seat had passed, and after the legislative session concluded, naming another guide, James Cooney to the seat. Mr. Cooney is also on the board of the Wild Sheep Foundation Alaska chapter. There will not be legislative confirmation hearings to approve or deny his appointment until the next session in 2022.

We will work in good faith with all the members of the Board of Game next year, but clearly the system is skewed when resident guides make up less than 1 percent of our resident hunting population, yet those commercial interests dominate how we are to manage our wildlife in accordance with our state constitution.

RHAK Volunteers Help Mitigate Pinnell Trail Damage Caused During 2020 Fortymile Caribou Hunt



Making Pinnell Trail repairs near Eagle Summit

There was quite a public outcry over the crowding and congestion along the Steese Highway during the 2020 Fortymile caribou hunt, and the damages caused by hunters to the nonmotorized Pinnell Mountain Trail on Bureau of Land management (BLM) lands.

Just prior to the opener, ADF&G announced a two-caribou bag limit for residents, either sex, which led to significant numbers of hunters on a rainy opening day, most of whom were using ATVs for access.

Hunters were mostly unaware of the mix of state and federal lands in the area and that the Pinnell Trail was nonmotorized.

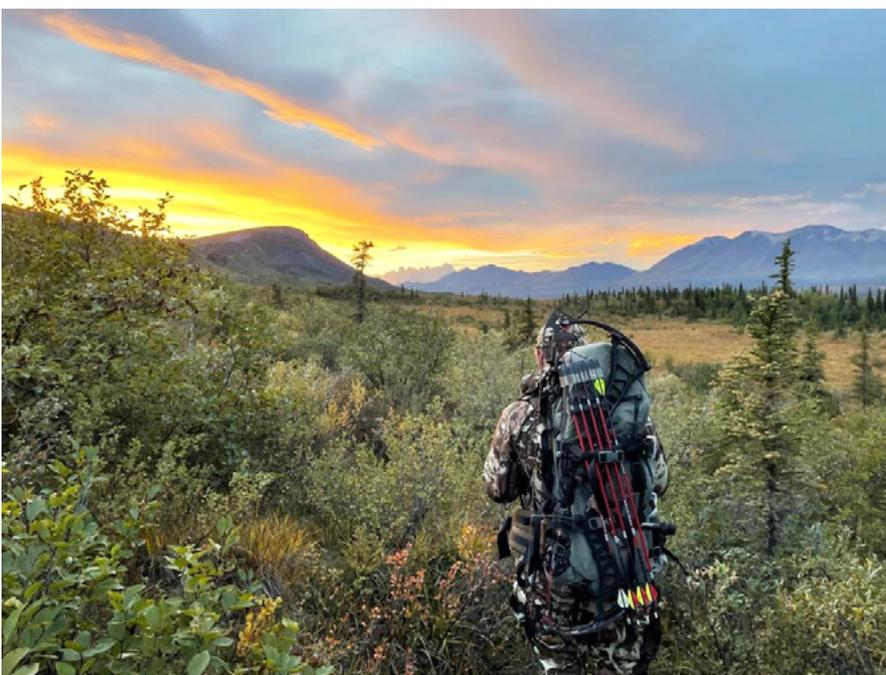
RHAK felt that hunters should be involved in helping to repair some of the damages, and a group of RHAK



RHAK cookout for volunteers and BLM staff

volunteers and Fairbanks Fish & Game Advisory Committee members drove out to Eagle Summit on the Steese Highway north of Fairbanks on June 5th to help work on the trail. After work was completed, RHAK hosted a cookout for all the volunteers and BLM staff.

The Board of Game will be discussing ways to better administer the Fortymile Hunt at the 2022 Statewide meeting. BLM has installed new signage and fencing to better mark the Pinnell Trail, and has new georeferenced maps available at the following web address so hunters can better inform themselves of land status and non-motorized areas: https://www.blm.gov/sites/blm.gov/files/docs/2021-07/Maps_GeoPDF_Alaska_Unit%2025C_Steese_Whites_Fortymile_Summer_2021.pdf



Jeffrey Wieber with muskox and caribou



With caribou and in camp are 7-year-old cousins Tristan Hines, Kruz Hartman, and Gunnar Hartman

Federal Subsistence Board News

Next spring, the Federal Subsistence Board will again take up deferred Wildlife Special Action Request WSA 21-01 from the NW Arctic Regional Advisory Council that asks to close all moose and caribou hunting in units 23 & 26A to non-local non-federally qualified subsistence hunters.

RHAK continues to oppose WSA 21-01, as ADF&G data shows that the Western Arctic Caribou Herd (WACH) is well above the population objectives at which any hunting restrictions should take place. From all reports, subsistence needs are being met. If that were not the case, we would support restrictions.

We continue to encourage the federal Regional Advisory Councils to utilize the Board of Game process, rather than the federal process, if they seek hunting restrictions, as the fed process lumps anyone who doesn't live in a rural Alaska zip code together, whether they are from another state or an Alaska resident.

Read the ADF&G Memorandum on WSA 21-01 at https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/home/news/pdfs/memorandum_temporary_special_action_wsa21-01.pdf



10-year-old Ava-Mai Frederick with her first caribou

Executive Director Report: Thoughts on Guiding and Non-Resident Hunting

By Mark Richards

Since RHAK's formation in 2016, we have been labeled by our opposition as "anti-guide" and "anti-nonresident." What that really implies is that promoting a clear resident hunting priority – just like most every other western state has – is actually being against guiding and nonresident hunting.

RHAK is not and never has been "anti-guide" or "anti-nonresident." We are unapologetically pro-resident and being so doesn't make us in any way opposed to guiding or nonresident hunting in Alaska.

It's true that if RHAK succeeds and the state finally recognizes and adheres to the resident hunting priority laid out in our state constitution, there will be less nonresident hunting opportunities than there are now, primarily for the "must-be-guided" species. The operative word is "less," not "none." Many of us enjoy having friends and family come up to hunt with us and experience our state. No one, RHAK included, wants to stop nonresidents from the lower 48 and the rest of the world from having the opportunity to hunt and experience Alaska and what we have to offer.

Less nonresident opportunities will equate to some guides having fewer clients, less income, because nonresidents are their main clientele. Some guides may decide to close shop with fewer clients and less income. We'd also see less money coming into ADF&G coffers from the sale of nonresident licenses and tags. But all that is also a byproduct of what the Alaska Professional Hunters Association (APHA), the organization that represents guides in Alaska, says needs to happen.

Here is what APHA had to say in 2008, in a push to limit guides on state lands: "Currently, overcrowding of guides on State lands combined with decreasing wildlife populations is stimulating social disorder between hunter user groups and biological harm to our wildlife which leads to establishment of the restrictive drawing permit hunts."

The Big Game Commercial Services Board (BGCSB) that regulates guides, and the Board of Game (BOG) that regulates hunters, agreed, though neither board was willing to use their authority to limit either guides or nonresident hunters; they only supported an unworkable and costly solution (that the legislature did not approve) that would give the Department of Natural Resources, the state agency that manages our lands, authority to regulate and limit guides on state lands.

The thing is, guides and nonresident hunters are inextricably tied because of our state's unique and ill-founded "must-be-guided" law. You limit one, you limit the other.

Sometimes when a course correction is needed, it negatively impacts some. But that negative impact to some isn't the goal. The course correction is. Whether it's RHAK, APHA, BGCSB, or BOG, all proposed solutions lead to a similar outcome for guides, nonresident hunters, and the state.

And in the end, doing nothing means worse outcomes for our wildlife, guides and their clients, and resident hunters.



Austin Smith cooking fish & waterfowl, and with a north slope caribou



Cassell Case: Kodiak Brown Bear Draw Permit Allocations

RHAK VP, Bob Cassell, is suing the state and Board of Game on Alaska constitutional grounds over the 40% allocation of Kodiak brown bear permits to nonresident guided hunters. All of the court documents are at <https://www.residenthuntersofalaska.org/complaint>.

The case is making its way through the courts, with oral arguments to be heard in Superior Court on December 20th. This case is extremely important for every Alaskan hunter who wants to ensure that any future draw hunt allocations for any species are prioritized for residents. Please consider donating to legal expenses via the above link.

Not only does the BOG allocate such a high percentage of permits to nonresidents, but the way they set this up, nonresidents don't actually have to go through a "lottery" process as residents do, with a slim chance of drawing. Any nonresident with enough money can simply call the guide and sign a contract and pick up an over-the-counter permit on Kodiak.

Here is an example of what's going on, taken from a social media post this year by a nonresident bear hunter:

"I made my fifth trip to Kodiak Island this spring. First trip 2006 killing 9-foot nice hided bear, 2nd trip in 2011 harvesting 9'6" bear. Then I had two trips looking for a bigger 10 foot bear I came home empty...but had plenty of opportunity to fill my tag. Finally spring of 2021 the Lord blessed me and I found my bear! 10 foot and a skull over 28". It has been quite a journey with lots of memories, big bear hunting gets in your blood."

And here is a reply that sums up the situation:

"How does a person draw Kodiak 5 times? It took me ten years to draw it once? Man these outfitter concessions have got to come to an end this isn't right."

Safari Club International (SCI) and their Alaska chapter (SCI AK), along with the Alaska Outdoor Council (AOC), have joined the Alaska Professional Hunters Association in opposition to this lawsuit. As SCI represents mostly Outside and non-U.S. citizens who have a stake in seeing Alaska's one-of-a-kind high allocations to nonresidents continue, it wasn't really a surprise that they

would oppose the case. But what was surprising was AOC and SCI AK jumping into the mix with opposition, as they are supposed to represent the interests of Alaskan hunters, who right now if they want to hunt a Kodiak brown bear are being openly discriminated against. If you are a member of these organizations, please contact them and ask why they are spending your membership dollars in support of a 40% allocation of Kodiak brown bear permits to nonresidents, and Alaskans having a 1-3% chance of drawing a permit while nonresidents with enough money are guaranteed the opportunity to hunt.



The Jewkes family wondering what happened



Lance Johnson with sheep

Renew Your Membership and Spread the Word

Membership renewal is quick and easy at

<https://www.residenthuntersofalaska.org/renew>

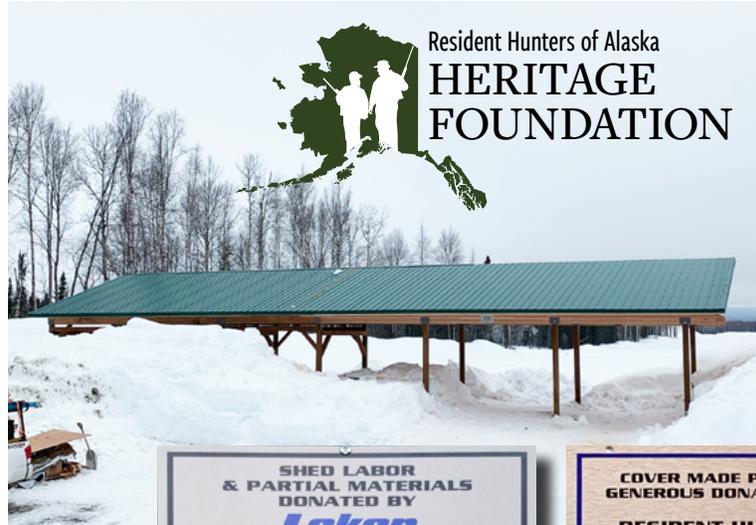
But you can always contact Mark Richards at 371-7436 or info@residenthuntersofalaska.org

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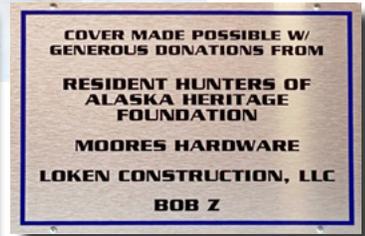
<https://www.residenthuntersofalaska.org/newsletters>

RHAK Heritage Foundation Launched!

RHAK board member Tyler Loken, and former board members JR Gates & Rob Stone, launched the Resident Hunters of Alaska Heritage Foundation, a new non-profit arm dedicated to education and conservation programs for Alaska's youth. The RHAK Heritage Foundation is committed to conservation and education for Alaskans and can take tax-deductible donations for these efforts. So far, the RHAK Heritage Foundation has helped with work on the Kincaid Archery Range in Anchorage and the Upper Susitna Shooters Association, and current efforts are an archery range in Wasilla and enclosing the youth .22 range at Rabbit Creek Rifle Range. We are looking for donations and folks that want to help! Contact Tyler for more info at tyler@lokenconstructionak.com.



Range cover with help of RHAK Heritage Foundation



From left to right: Bob Cassell (RHAK), Wayne Kubat (APHA), Eddie Grasser (ADF&G), Sen. Revak, Gov. Dunleavy, Kevin Kehoe (WSF-AK)

SB 22 Bill Signing

RHAK and other organizations overwhelmingly supported SB 22, sponsored by Senator Josh Revak, to continue an Intensive Management surcharge on all hunting licenses (\$10 for residents, \$30 for nonresidents) that in conjunction with Pittman-Robertson federal funds will help fund ADF&G's population survey and inventory work and any Intensive Management programs. RHAK VP, Bob Cassell, attended the bill signing ceremony with other organization leaders. This is a prime example of working together with other organizations on a common purpose.

Ongoing Pandemic Hurting Fundraising

It's been two years now since we've been able to host our annual fundraising banquet, **which is our primary source of funding**. One way you can help is by renewing your membership at <https://www.residenthuntersofalaska.org/renew> when you get a notice. Upgrade your membership. Spread the word to family and friends. Donate at <https://residenthuntersofalaska.salsalabs.org/DonateToday/index.html> to help support our mission during this critical time, or join as a business sponsor. Learn more at <https://www.residenthuntersofalaska.org/business>. If you'd like to help as a business with some of our legal fees, that can be done too. Contact Mark Richards if you'd like to help! **RHAK is critical to keeping the issues we so deeply care about before our politicians and boards and the public, and advocating for change to protect and enhance our future hunting opportunities.**

2022 Banquet!

Our 2022 banquet is scheduled for March 26, 2022 in Anchorage at the Egan Center and we are counting on it going forward, so reserve the date! We will also be hosting more member meetings as covid cases wind down. Thank you for your continued support!

Member Photos



Sawyer Stephenson hunting caribou and afterwards, on the way home

The Jewkes family



Caribou hunt photo from Shawn Davis

Dalton Borton with a haul road caribou

Member Photos



Neil Strausbaugh's moose



Jeff Bushke got a caribou on the last day of the season



Barry Gillis with his sheep



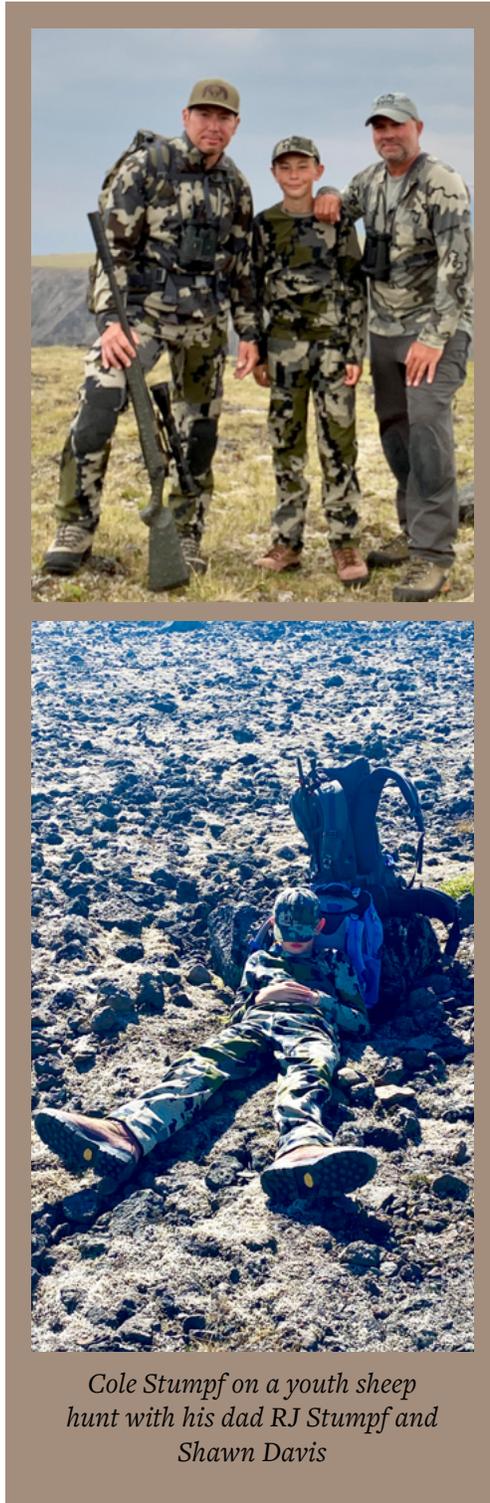
The Dashow family



Member Photos



Beau, Colton, and Hudson Lukens



Cole Stumpf on a youth sheep hunt with his dad RJ Stumpf and Shawn Davis



Ben Allison and Dave Porter muskox combo



Adam Hartman glassing

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