

PROPOSAL 82

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

Change nonresident sheep hunting in Unit 19C as follows:

Unit 19C

Nonresident Hunters

One ram with full curl horn or larger by drawing permit only, every four regulatory years; up to 10 permits may be issued

Aug 10 – Sept 20

[ONE RAM WITH FULL CURL HORN
OR LARGER, EVERY FOUR REGULATORY YEARS]

Alternatively, the board could use a percentage of the estimated harvestable surplus of legal rams to allocate draw permits to nonresidents, as follows:

Unit 19C

Nonresident Hunters

One ram with full curl horn or larger by drawing permit only, every four regulatory years; the number of permits issued may be up to 25 percent of the estimated harvestable surplus of sheep.

Aug 10 – Sept 20

[ONE RAM WITH FULL CURL HORN
OR LARGER, EVERY FOUR REGULATORY YEARS]

Note: The Department states that there is currently a harvestable surplus of 30 legal rams in Unit 19C.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Since our formation in 2016, Resident Hunters of Alaska (RHAK) has been submitting proposals (all voted down) to limit nonresident sheep hunters in Unit 19C, based on sheep conservation concerns and fears residents would lose general sheep hunting opportunities if nonresidents were not limited. For over a decade, unlimited nonresident sheep hunters have taken nearly 80 percent of the annual ram harvest in Unit 19C. In RY 2020, the department closed the winter subsistence sheep hunt based on biological concerns for the sheep population, but the board did not act as required to place any restrictions on the general hunt. The sheep population continued to decline and in 2022 nonresident sheep hunters took 90 percent of the harvest of a significantly reduced sheep population.

Our concerns and fears were realized when the board, after years of implying that unlimited sheep hunting opportunity under full-curl harvest management was sustainable, submitted their own board-generated Proposal 204 out of cycle for the 2023 Region II (Southcentral) meeting to completely close all sheep hunting in Unit 19C for five years for everyone, based on conservation concerns for the sheep population.

Proposal 204 was amended to close Unit 19C sheep hunting only for nonresidents for five years and passed by a 4-3 vote.

RHAK has never sought to eliminate nonresident sheep hunters, and had the board taken action in previous years to limit nonresident sheep hunters, this complete nonresident sheep hunting closure in Unit 19C would not have been necessary and would not had such an impact on guides and their clients who already

had hunts booked, as well as impacts to department revenues from the loss of income from the sale of nonresident hunting licenses and sheep tags.

This proposal is being drafted after the board decision in March of 2023 to close Unit 19C to all nonresident sheep hunting for five years, recognizing that there will likely be proposals submitted for the Region III (Interior and Eastern Arctic) meeting in 2024 to open the nonresident sheep hunt earlier.

We could support a nonresident opening prior to 2028 if nonresident sheep hunters were put on a draw permit system now with a limited allocation of permits.

PROPOSED BY: Resident Hunters of Alaska (HQ-F23-015)
