

# Hunting and Trapping

## Emergency Order

Alaska Department  
of Fish and Game

Under the Authority of AS 16.05.060

**Emergency Order** 05-06-14

**Issued at** Kotzebue, Alaska  
August 8, 2014

**Effective Date:** 11:59 p.m.  
August 9, 2014

**Expiration Date:** June 30, 2015

### EXPLANATION:

This Emergency Order closes all sheep seasons in Game Management Units 23 and 26(A) for all resident and nonresident hunters due to severe decline in sheep numbers in the contiguous populations of the De Long Mountains and Schwatka Mountains. General season hunts by harvest ticket for residents and nonresidents with full-curl bag limits are closed by this action. Resident registration subsistence permit hunts for any sheep (RS388 and RS389) are closed on August 9, 2014 at 11:59 p.m. Due to the low population status, no harvest of sheep is warranted.

### REGULATION:

Therefore, the following regulations in **5 AAC 85.055 (a) (9) and (10) HUNTING SEASONS AND BAG LIMITS FOR DALL SHEEP**, are superseded by this emergency order as follows:

<b>Units and Bag Limits</b>	<b>Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)</b>	<b>Nonresident Open Season</b>
(9)  Unit 23, that portion north of Rabbit Creek, Kiyak Creek, and the Noatak River, and west of the Aniuk River ("DeLong Mountains")		
<b>RESIDENT HUNTERS:</b> 1 sheep by registration permit only	No open season (Subsistence hunt only)	
<b>ALL HUNTERS:</b> 1 ram with full-curl horn or larger by drawing permit only,	No open season	No open season

provided that the harvestable surplus is greater than 9 sheep in combination with that portion of Unit 26(A), west of the Etivluk River.

Unit 23, that portion south of Rabbit Creek, Kiyak Creek, and the Noatak River, and west of the Cutler and Redstone Rivers (“Baird Mountains”)

**RESIDENT HUNTERS:**

1 sheep by registration permit only	No open season (Subsistence hunt only)	
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**ALL HUNTERS:**

1 ram with full-curl horn or larger by drawing permit only, provided that the harvestable surplus is greater than 47 sheep	No open season	No open season
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Remainder of Unit 23 (“Schwatka Mountains”)

**RESIDENT HUNTERS:**

3 sheep by registration permit only	Aug. 1–Aug. 9 (Subsistence hunt only)	
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**ALL HUNTERS:**

1 ram with full-curl horn or larger	No open season	No open season
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(10)  
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Unit 26(A), that portion west of the Etivluk River

**RESIDENT HUNTERS:**

1 sheep by registration permit only	No open season (Subsistence hunt only)	
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**ALL HUNTERS:**

1 ram with full-curl horn or larger by drawing permit only provided that the harvestable surplus is greater than 9 in combination with that portion of Unit 23 in the DeLong Mountains	No open season	No open season
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Unit 26(A), that portion east of the Etivluk River excluding Gates of the Arctic National Park

**RESIDENT HUNTERS:**

3 sheep by registration permit only	Aug. 1–Aug. 9 (Subsistence hunt only)	
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**ALL HUNTERS:**

1 ram with full-curl horn or larger	No open season	No open season
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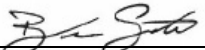
Unit 26(A), that portion within Gates of the Arctic National Park

3 sheep	Aug. 1–Aug. 9	No open season
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All sheep hunting regulations in Unit 23 and 26A are changed by this emergency order.

Cora Campbell  
Commissioner

By delegation to:

  
Brandon Saito  
Area Biologist

**JUSTIFICATION:**

Sheep populations in the western Brooks Range within Units 23 and 26(A) experienced severe winter conditions in 2013-2014. Starvation and loss of protective habitat resulting from ground-fast ice have contributed to increased declines of sheep populations in the De Long Mountains and Schwatka Mountains. Previous declines during 2009–2011, low reproductive potential, and poor lamb production over a multi-year period have significantly reduced the number of sheep in Units 23 and 26(A). Other contributing factors may include predation, disease, range deterioration from when sheep numbers were higher, and large numbers of migratory caribou competing for, and impacting, sheep forage habitat at lower elevations.

In 2014 sheep surveys were completed during late June and early July in broad areas of the western Brooks Range (Units 23 and 26A) through coordination by National Park Service (NPS) and department biologists. Preliminary results indicate a population decline of between 50-75% from the previous survey levels documented in 2011. The status of the population in 2011 was declining at a level of up to 30% compared to the population counted in 2009. In 2014, the total number of sheep observed on transects (n=102 sheep) was nearly

70% lower than on transects in 2011 (n=330 sheep). Of the 102 sheep observed in 2014, there were only 15 rams less than full-curl, one full-curl ram, and only 2 lambs.

Based on surveys in Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve, Western Alaska Parklands and Bureau of Land Management lands in western Brooks Range, the current population decline covers broad areas of the contiguous sheep populations in Units 23 and 26(A) and is characterized by low abundance of adults and low lamb productivity. The level of decline exceeds the depleted population from severe winters in 1989 through 1991. The large decline in the overall population, the low numbers of rams in the population, and the apparent very low recruitment rate all suggest that any level of harvest could be detrimental to the population, prolong the decline, and limit recovery.

The closure covers all state general season and registration subsistence hunts in the De Long Mountains, Schwatka Mountains, and state managed lands in Unit 26(A) in regulatory year 2014-2015. The general season closure affects all resident and nonresident hunting in Units 23 and 26(A). The registration hunt closure affects resident permits RS388 (De Long Mountains) and RS389 (Schwatka Mountains).

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